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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, June 3, 2003

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, June 3, 2003

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

● (1005)

[*Translation*]

INFORMATION COMMISSIONER

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to section 38 of the Access to Information Act, I have the honour to lay upon the table the report of the information commissioner for April 1, 2002 to March 31, 2003.

This report is deemed permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

JUNO BEACH CENTRE

Hon. Rey Pagtakhan (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Secretary of State (Science, Research and Development), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as Minister of Veterans Affairs, I declare June 6, 2003, a day of recognition to commemorate the official opening of the Juno Beach Centre in Courseulles-sur-Mer in Normandy, France. The day coincides with the 59th anniversary of D-Day and the start of the Normandy campaign to liberate western Europe from the Nazi tyranny, and a day it shall be. Almost 1,000 Canadian veterans will gather there with our Prime Minister to pay tribute to Canada's contributions during the Second World War. It equally will be my honour to join them on Friday at this historic beach on this historic day.

Declaring this coming June 6 a special day gratefully acknowledges the dream and the hard work of the Juno Beach Association to see this centre established. I commend the association, and particularly its president, Mr. Garth Webb, for their dedication and determination.

I applaud Canadian benefactors nationwide who contributed—businesses, provincial governments and individual citizens—for their charitable spirit toward the realization of this dream. The Government of Canada takes pride in being able to provide significant support to this laudable endeavour.

I would like to thank Halifax councillor Mr. Brian Warshick and colleagues in the House, particularly the members for Haliburton—Victoria—Brock and for Dartmouth, for conveying to me their interest in today's ministerial declaration. How fitting and proper indeed it is to issue one.

D-Day at Juno Beach brought Canada to centre stage internationally during the Second World War, just as the battle of Vimy Ridge did during the Great War. On D-Day, 340 young Canadians lost their lives on Juno Beach. More casualties followed in the 10 weeks it took to cross the countryside of Normandy. Five thousand and twenty-one Canadians paid the supreme sacrifice.

The numbers alone are telling. What brings us greater sorrow is knowing we lost them in their prime. They never returned home. They missed the opportunity to raise their own families. But all of them, together with their comrades who were fortunate to return, including those on the home front, raised the banner of freedom and peace.

The Juno Beach Centre aims to memorialize for future generations the life lessons of this epic battle. It aims to teach future generations about the heroic role Canada played during the Second World War, not only in Normandy, but also in other places such as Hong Kong and Italy. It aims to remind the older generation and to teach the younger about the war effort on the home front: that all three of Canada's military services, the Royal Canadian Air Force, the Royal Canadian Navy, and the Canadian Army proved themselves to be a better match against the powerful enemy forces they met, and that the Merchant Navy, for its heroic part, carried the troops and the landing crafts in which the troops stormed the beaches.

On this Friday, June 6, I ask all Canadians to pause and reflect, to remember those gallant Canadians, to remember that they served their country with valour so that we and our children and our children's children might live in freedom and peace and to remember that they helped shape our nation. To them we owe our never-ending gratitude as a people. To them we owe a duty to carry forward their life stories and their love for Canada and her values. This we pledge to do today, tomorrow and forever.

● (1010)

Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, there is something unique about the event to which we will be travelling on Friday. It is unique in the way that the emphasis for this development came not from governments but from the veterans themselves.

The veterans saw that there was a compelling need to preserve the memory and to tell the story of Canada's military and civilian contributions during World War II. To date there has been no significant Canadian memorial anywhere that ranks these achievements, not until a select group of veterans got together and went ahead and built this fine facility, which will be officially opened Friday, June 6, one year ahead of the 60th anniversary of June 6. I am indeed very proud to recognize this 59th anniversary and I am indeed proud to be able to represent Her Majesty's loyal opposition.

This is a dream come true for thousands of veterans. We in the House of Commons have many people to thank. Mainly we thank the veterans of Canada, and we also say thanks for the provincial help, as the minister has mentioned, and the federal help. Let us also remember that there was one unarmed group of the military there and that was our Merchant Marines. We shall never forget that. Let us also pay tribute to the groups of individuals, the businesses and the corporations that also gave money for this event.

I knew some of the men who went on the Juno raid in 1944. One of the interesting things is that last year at this time we visited Dieppe and some of the returnees who were not slaughtered at Dieppe were also on this raid, as well as those from north Africa and the Italian campaign.

It is an honour and a dream come true and this monument will serve for many generations.

Already there and also on their way there are groups of Merchant Marines. The House on May 19 gave first reading to Bill C-411, which would enact a Merchant Marine Navy Day on September 3 every year. I would be grateful, and I think the Merchant Marines who were there would be grateful, if the House would have both second and third reading of the bill, and I would ask for unanimous consent. Then they could have their day recognized while they are there and by the time they return.

● (1015)

The Deputy Speaker: I would say respectfully to the members, particularly on the subject matter presently before the House, that the Chair would appreciate a little more clarification. My understanding is that presently we are dealing with the minister's statement. We do not have a motion as such before the House, which the member has referred to with regard to unanimous consent. I wonder if the member for Souris—Moose Mountain would clarify things.

Mr. Roy Bailey: Mr. Speaker, perhaps I will not include it as part of my remarks to the minister. Later on a point of order I will make a motion at that time.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Quebecois joins with the minister and all other colleagues to commemorate the events of June 6, 1944. It is easy for me to speak about that day because my father, who took part in the liberation of Holland, told many stories about those events.

Of course, he did not take part in the landing in Normandy. DUring this landing, Canadian troops set foot in Europe for the first time. They expected strong resistance since the Nazis had built a whole series of bunkers and put barbed wire and guns on the beach in anticipation of the landing. Quebeckers and Canadians distinguished themselves during the battle.

We must remember that the Americans landed on Utah and Omaha Beaches. The British had three divisions, which landed on Sword and Gold Beaches, and on Juno Beach in the middle. Canadians and Quebeckers played a heroic role in breaking through enemy lines; unfortunately, a great number of them lost their lives. There were 14,000 Canadians under the command of General Keller. At the end of the day, there were 1,074 casualties, including 359 killed in action.

It is important to remember our veterans, and I believe that the younger generations today does not know what sacrifices those people made. It is important to commemorate this event every year, and also to have an interpretive monument at Juno Beach to explain to future generations how important those who fought for our freedom really were.

We will therefore take part in any event held to honour veterans because, as I just said, they fought and died for the values of our societies—of Europe, Canada, and the United States. These people knew the importance of freedom, including the freedom of speech. They also knew that we live in a democratic system and were prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice, to risk their lives to protect these values.

Therefore, when an event such as June 6, 1944 is to be commemorated, we must clearly state that we are in full agreement. Many people risked their lives and many lives were lost. They were people who could have stayed at home and they could have said, “I just want to live a quiet life with my family”.

Yes, of course, there was conscription, and we cannot overlook this fact. Quebeckers said no to conscription, and yet, many Quebecers went overseas to serve and do their duty. My father was one of them, along with the 14,000 Canadians mentioned earlier, undoubtedly several thousand from Quebec.

And so, I think this is the appropriate thing to do. Let us commemorate, let us make sure that the history is known, so that the next generation knows that the quality of life we enjoy today, and the fact that we live in a democratic and open world, where there is freedom of expression, are due in large part to these soldiers, who landed on the beaches of Normandy on June 6, 1944. The war in Normandy was difficult. We lost many soldiers there, in order to preserve the values of which I have just spoken.

In conclusion, we in the Bloc Quebecois, along with all the parties in this House, are going to commemorate the these people's actions. Lest we forget.

● (1020)

[*English*]

Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's West, PC): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Progressive Conservative Party it is an honour to pay tribute to the people who, 59 years ago, not only gave their lives but also participated fully in the freeing up of what we call today in the west, the free world. I wish to congratulate the minister on his statement and on the initiative of the Canadian government in involving itself in commemorating such a tremendous occasion.

I doubt if there is anyone in the House who directly or indirectly has not been touched by some involvement in the second world war. When we were going through the darkest days, as Churchill said, when things looked pretty grim for Europe, when we saw nations like France, Italy, and others under the control of the Germans, the future looked very dim for Europe and consequently the western world. But it was the Canadians who did what Canadians always do. When our friends are in need, when they are in trouble, Canadians are there by their side. That is the way it always has been. That is the way it always should be.

In this case, 14,000 Canadians—and we can only imagine what it was like in those days—came from the farms of western Canada, from the outlying regions of eastern Canada, and from Quebec, to cross the ocean to participate in a battle in a strange new world, and to do it so heroically. The Norman invasion turned a page. From that day on we started to move toward freeing Europe, and by doing so, freed the western world.

It is an honour and a pleasure that we pay tribute to the people who participated in that great battle, that great war. It is something that we should pass on to our children and grandchildren because we who have this great freedom in this country should never forget those who paid the price to give it to us.

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the New Democratic Party, provincially and federally across the country, it gives me great pleasure to thank the minister, the government, and all those people who will be attending and those who will remember the activities of what happened on June 6, 1944.

The father of my colleague from the Bloc, the member for Saint-Jean, was a liberator. I was born in a country that his father and many others liberated. I am the by-product of what happens when we fight for peace, freedom and democracy around the world. On June 6, 2003, we will be commemorating that magnificent symbol of what the interpretation centre will mean, not just to what happened on that particular day but the story and the events of that particular day.

At the legion in Windsor, Ontario, bookmarks are given to guests when they visit which says "Let peace be their remembrance". This is what this interpretation centre should do, not only tell the story but encourage people to work for peace around the world so that we do not have to go through this terrible event again.

I wish to recognize our Sergeant-at-arms, himself a veteran, who served his country and his colleagues. We do this in remembrance of the sacrifice that he made, and those who could not come back from that terrible day and the events of the war as well.

I would like to remember the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, and those veterans who fought in the service of the British empire who are now part of Canada. They too served their country with valour and distinction. I want to mention two people in my area of Nova Scotia who have worked so hard to bring this day to fruition: Mr. Doug Shanks, a veteran and a member of the legion who worked very hard to raise funds so that we could have this interpretation centre, and Councillor Brian Warshick of the Halifax regional municipality, who worked tirelessly to bring this day to fruition. He has advised me to advise all Canadians that on June 6 we should pause and reflect upon what happened on that day, and how the turn of the war came about. I encourage all Canadians to pause and reflect on June 6 upon what happened on that particular day.

On behalf of the New Democratic Party, federally and provincially, it gives me great pleasure to travel with the veterans affairs minister and others in the House, and in a non-partisan way to participate this Friday in an event that should be commemorated for many years to come. To all those veterans and their families who paid the ultimate sacrifice, I wish to express my thanks and wish them all the best. May God bless them.

* * *

● (1025)

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present the 32nd report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding the report of the Electoral Boundaries Commission for Nova Scotia. This report and related evidence will be forwarded to the commission for its consideration.

I would like to thank the subcommittee that worked on this report and all the members who made presentations to it.

* * *

PETITIONS

FIREARMS REGISTRY

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition that calls on the federal government to scrap the gun registry because as of January 1, 2003, thousands of Canadians, through no fault of their own, now possess unregistered firearms. Anyone who tries to register a firearm is now exposed to federal prosecution. It is recognized that nine out of ten provinces as well as MPs, senators and the Auditor General of Canada all agree that the Canadian firearms registry is out of control.

My petitioners call upon Parliament, the Department of Justice and the Government of Canada to declare an immediate amnesty for all unregistered firearms or, in the absence of an amnesty, to scrap the firearms registry altogether.

IRAQ

Mr. David Chatters (Athabasca, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I would like to present a petition today on behalf of the Muslim community in Fort McMurray. It is protesting the war in Iraq and urging the Canadian government to urge the United States to pull its troops out of the country and get on with the humanitarian efforts to rebuild the country.

CANADA POST

Ms. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of my constituents. The petitioners wish to draw to the attention of the House section 13 of the Canada Post Corporation Act that discriminates against rural route mail couriers who do not have the same pay or working conditions as other mail couriers with Canada Post. The petitioners ask that Parliament repeal that section of the act to allow for parity and equality.

RIGHTS OF THE UNBORN

Mr. Janko Péric (Cambridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I have the privilege to present to the House a petition with 100 signatures from concerned citizens of my riding of Cambridge.

In Canada one child in four dies before birth as a result of induced abortion. More than half of all Canadians believe that human life deserves protection prior to birth. The petitioners call upon Parliament to enact legislation to protect Canadian unborn children.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. John Herron (Fundy—Royal, PC): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting a petition on behalf of Mr. Brian Holmes of Ontario regarding aerial spraying. Mr. Holmes has collected signatures from across the country from concerned Canadians who believe that chemicals used in aerial sprayings are adversely affecting the health of Canadians.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to stop this type of high altitude spraying. The petition has been duly certified by the clerk and I present it at this time.

● (1030)

HEALTH

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from citizens of Peterborough area and elsewhere who are concerned about acrylamides. Acrylamides are dangerous toxic substances known to cause cancer in mice and which are formed from sugars. The petitioners point out that potatoes and grains contain these precursors in huge amounts, and that the concentration in fries exceeds 600-fold to 700-fold those allowed for these substances in drinking water in the United States.

The undersigned citizens request that Parliament legislate that all labels on processed foods be required to show the concentration of acrylamides therein.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Ms. Judy Sgro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 173, 211, 225 and 227.

[*Text*]

Question No. 173—**Mr. John Reynolds**:

> Pertaining to the Commonwealth Day that took place Monday, March 10, 2003 and the 1.7 billion people from the Commonwealth countries, can the government please indicate the amount, in dollars, spent by the government on all activities and undertakings in Canada to recognize this day and our membership in the Commonwealth?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): The Department of Canadian Heritage has not been involved in the undertaking of activities or celebrations in recognition of Commonwealth Day. Therefore no money was spent.

Question No. 211—**Mr. Rob Merrifield**:

> With regard to dental plastics containing bisPhenol A (BPA), also known as BisGMA: (*a*) is Health Canada aware of studies questioning the safety of this product; (*b*) is Health Canada convinced of the safety of this product; (*c*) how does Health Canada test and approve dental plastics before they are allowed on the market; (*d*) what tests were undertaken on "Conquest", a dental plastic containing BisGMA; (*e*) how many enquiries has the minister received from alleged victims of dental plastic containing BPA; (*f*) is Health Canada considering compensation for alleged victims of BPA; and (*g*) is Health Canada aware of jurisdictions which have banned dental plastic containing BPA; if so, what are they?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Health, Lib.): (a) No.

(b) Yes.

(c) Health Canada does not test any dental restorative materials, including dental plastics. Dental plastics are regulated as a medical device in Canada. The manufacturer of these products must provide evidence that the material satisfies the safety and effectiveness requirements of the Food and Drugs Act and the medical devices regulations before it may be legally sold in Canada. The medical devices regulations also require the reporting of adverse events or incidents causing injury to users of medical devices.

(d) There is no Health Canada licence for a dental device named Conquest. Dental restorative materials, such as those that contain BPA, are class III devices. The medical devices regulations require manufacturers of class III devices to provide evidence of safety and effectiveness before being authorized to sell. Manufacturers are obliged to inform the regulator should evidence to the contrary come to light. Health Canada has found no test results or other evidence suggesting that Conquest or other dental restorative materials containing BPA are unsafe.

(e) One inquiry has been made on behalf of an alleged victim.

(f) No.

(g) Health Canada is not aware of other jurisdictions that restrict the use of dental plastic containing BPA.

Question No. 225—**Mr. Peter Stoffer**:

With respect to the control of firearms in Canada and to the 9,000 reported revocations and refusals of licenses pursuant to the provisions of the Firearms Act, and for each of the following types of license: possession-only license (POL), possession and acquisition license (PAL)(non-restricted) or possession and acquisition license (PAL)(restricted): (*a*) how many of the 9,000 revocations and refusals fell into each of these two categories;(*b*) how many of those whose applications were refused were first time applicants and how many were seeking renewal of their licenses; (*c*) how many licenses were refused pursuant to section 5(1) of the Firearms Act (FA) because of: (i) concerns that applicants might harm themselves; or (ii) concerns that the applicants might harm others; (*d*) how many licenses were refused pursuant to section 5(2)(a) of the FA because of convictions or discharges under section 736 of the Criminal Code during the 5 years preceding the application; (*e*) how many licenses were refused pursuant to section 5(2)(b) of the FA because of treatment of mental illness during the 5 years preceding the application; (*f*) how many licenses were refused pursuant to section 5(2)(c) of the FA because of a history of violent behavior during the 5 years preceding the application; (*g*) how many licenses were refused pursuant to sections 3(d), 3(2), or 4(1) of the Firearms Licenses Regulations (SOR/98 – 199) because a former spouse, an ex-spouse, or a common law partner expressed concern regarding the acquisition of firearms by the applicant; (*h*) how many licenses were refused pursuant to section 6 of the FA because the applicants were under prohibition orders; (i) how many licenses were refused pursuant to section 7 of the FA because: (*i*) the applicants did not complete the non-restricted courses; or (ii) the applicants did not complete the restricted courses; (*j*) how many licenses were refused that do not belong to either of the two categories referred to in the above paragraph (i); (*k*) how many licenses were revoked pursuant to section 70(a)(i) of the FA because the applicants are no longer or never were eligible; (*l*) how many licenses were revoked pursuant to section 70(a)(ii) of the FA because the applicants contravened a condition of a license; (*m*) how many licenses were revoked pursuant to section 70(a)(iii) of the FA because the applicants were charged or discharged under section 736 of the Criminal Code or because they committed an offense listed in section 5(2)(a) of the FA; (*n*) how many licenses were revoked for reasons others than the ones referred to in the above paragraphs (*k*), (*l*) or (*m*); and (*o*) how many licenses were revoked pursuant to section 16(1) of the Firearms Licenses Regulations (SOR/98 – 199) because a chief firearms officer who issued a license becomes concerned that the holder thereof has been involved in: (i) an act of domestic violence; or (ii) stalking?

Hon. Wayne Easter (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): The answer is as follows: a) Stats are as of May 5, 2003.

Licence Type	Refused	Revoked	
PALs	2,169	2,498	4,667
POLs	2,981	1,871	4,852
		Grand Total	9,519

There is no statistical breakdown available for questions (b) to (o).

The CFC is in the process of reviewing its statistical and other information requirements. This is part of our ongoing efforts to report on program achievements and effectiveness.

Question No. 227—**Mr. Garry Breitkreuz**:

With respect to reference and background checks done on each Possession and Acquisition Licence (PAL) applicant, what is the total number of PAL applications that have been processed since December 1, 1998, and how many of the two references per PAL application were actually called?

Hon. Wayne Easter (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): As of May 10, 2003, the total number of PAL applications that have been processed since December 1, 1998, is 659,083. Reference checks are performed during the course of an investigation, at the discretion of the investigator, based on the issue being assessed. There are no statistics available on how many of the two references per PAL application were actually called.

Speaker's Ruling

The CFC is in the process of reviewing its statistical and other information requirements. This is part of our ongoing efforts to report on program achievements and effectiveness.

[*English*]

Ms. Judy Sgro: Mr. Speaker, I ask that all remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*Translation*]

I wish to inform the House that because of the ministerial statement, government orders will be extended by 18 minutes.

[*English*]

Earlier in the proceedings, following statements by ministers, the hon. member for Souris—Moose Mountain spoke of a point of order. Is he ready to proceed with that now?

The hon. member for Souris—Moose Mountain.

Mr. Roy Bailey: Mr. Speaker, I seek the unanimous consent of the House to allow Bill C-411, an act to establish merchant navy veterans day, to pass in all stages so that we can announce it to the merchant marine before June 6.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. member for Souris—Moose Mountain have the unanimous consent of the House to propose the motion.

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

STANDING COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Deputy Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on the point of order raised by the hon. government House leader on May 29, 2003, concerning the procedural acceptability of the third report of the Standing Committee on Transport presented earlier that day.

[*Translation*]

I thank the hon. government House leader for having drawn this matter to the attention of the House. I would also like to thank the hon. members for Thunder Bay—Superior North; New Westminster—Coquitlam—Burnaby; Saanich—Gulf Islands; Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel; Acadie—Bathurst; Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans; Kootenay—Boundary—Okanagan; and Ottawa West—Nepean for their comments.

[*English*]

In questioning the receivability of the transport committee's third report, the government House leader drew four points to the Chair's attention. He indicated, first, that in order for a properly constituted committee meeting to take place simultaneous interpretation services must be available.

Speaker's Ruling

Second, he contended that provision must be made for the recording of committee deliberations so that a permanent record of the deliberations, corresponding to the debates of the House, may be produced.

[*Translation*]

Third, he noted that committee meetings are usually open to the public and to members of the media, who are also entitled to simultaneous interpretation services.

Finally, the government House leader indicated that no notice had been sent out for the committee's meeting on May 29.

[*English*]

The government House leader raised concerns that these four elements had been ignored by the transport committee, which met in a room in the parliamentary restaurant rather than in one of the fully equipped committee rooms. In the absence of these elements, he argued that the report of the committee must be regarded as not having been adopted at a properly constituted meeting and, therefore, the Speaker should rule it out of order.

In replying to these concerns, the chair of the transport committee, the hon. member for Thunder Bay—Superior North, stated that at its meeting on May 28 the committee had decided to continue its deliberations on the morning of May 29. When quorum was lost, the committee was prevented from taking any decisions with respect to the estimates it was studying so the chair suspended the meeting until the next day.

The chair pointed out that the committee met in a room in the parliamentary restaurant only because none of the regular committee rooms were available at 8:00 a.m. on May 29 and the committee was working to respect the reporting deadline for main estimates set out in Standing Order 81(4).

[*Translation*]

Hon. members will be familiar with the beginning lines of Standing Order 81(4), which read:

> In every session the main estimates to cover the incoming fiscal year for every department of government shall be deemed referred to standing committees on or before March 1 of the then expiring fiscal year. Each such committee shall consider and shall report, or shall be deemed to have reported, the same back to the House not later than May 31 of the then current fiscal year—

This year, May 29 was the last sitting day prior to the May 31 deadline on which reports on the estimates could be presented

● (1035)

[*English*]

The hon. member for Thunder Bay—Superior North indicated that a recording was made of the proceedings at the meeting and that an interpreter from the Interpretation and Parliamentary Translation Service was present. He also stated that the quorum requirement was satisfied and that the clerk of the committee was present to ensure that the committee's decisions were properly recorded in its minutes.

Most important, the chair also pointed out that no objections to any of the committee's arrangements were raised by the members who attended the meeting.

I have examined the minutes of the transport committee Meeting No. 30, the only documents available to the Speaker since the meetings were held in camera, and the minutes confirm the committee chair's statements.

I would now like to respond to the four objections raised by the hon. government House leader with respect to this case.

First, there is the question of simultaneous interpretation. Like the hon. members who spoke to this issue, I too would like to underline the obligation that we have to respect the rights of members to use the official language of their choice. Hon. members at the committee acknowledge that ad hoc arrangements were made for interpretation and that these were considered satisfactory by the committee members present.

Second, there is the matter of recording. There is no disputing that the committee chose to meet in a room where the usual services could not be provided and that recording for transcription and subsequent publication was not available. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that, in the view of the members of the committee present, the meeting room was adequate to their needs since the committee was meeting in camera, transcription was not required and publication was not contemplated.

On the fourth point at issue, the matter of notice, here again since the meeting was in camera, neither the public, the media nor other members would be entitled to attend the meetings so the matter of notice in their regard is moot.

Your Speaker is, however, somewhat troubled by the notion of an overnight suspension of proceedings. As hon. members know, if the Speaker's attention is drawn to a lack of quorum and no quorum is found, the House must adjourn forthwith. While it may be argued that no such obligation exists for committees, I would not consider the unorthodox actions of the transport committee in this particular instance to be a precedent in committee practice.

The chair of the committee has explained the circumstances of his decision to suspend the meeting on Wednesday night having lost the quorum needed to adopt a report and to reconvene at the earliest possible moment on Thursday so as to be able to report on the estimates within the timeframe provided by the standing orders. Your Speaker is bound to accept the explanation of the hon. member.

[*Translation*]

However, the fact remains that, like my predecessors, I am very reluctant to interfere in the work of any committee. I think it is worth reminding the House of the liberty that it grants to committees. *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, page 804, states:

> —committees are bound to follow the procedures set out in the Standing Orders as well as any specific sessional or special orders that the House has issued to them. Committees are otherwise left free to organize their work. In this sense, committees are said to be "masters of their own proceedings".

[*English*]

The actions of the Standing Committee on Transport in this instance might well have given rise to various questions perhaps about the overnight suspension, perhaps about meeting without the usual services or notice, but the fact is, as the chair of the committee has stated, no such questions were raised in the committee itself, nor did anyone who rose to speak in response to the government House leader's point of order make that claim.

Hon. members know that should they have procedural concerns about matters related to the arrangements that a committee has made for its meetings or the conduct of its business, it is in the committee itself that they should raise them.

I have said that committees are granted much liberty by the House but, along with the right to conduct their proceedings in a way that facilitates their deliberations, committees have a concomitant responsibility to see that the necessary rules and procedures are followed and the rights of members and the Canadian public are respected. Issues concerning such matters should be brought before the committee for resolution.

● (1040)

[*Translation*]

As I have said, in the present case, no such questions were raised and no evidence has been presented to suggest that the transport committee exceeded its authority to conduct its proceedings as its members saw fit.

[*English*]

On that basis, after reviewing the minutes of the transport committee's meeting and the contents of the third report itself, I find that the report was adopted by the committee in conformity with our rules and practices, that the report has been duly presented in the House and that it is now properly before the House.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

PUBLIC SERVICE MODERNIZATION ACT

The House resumed from June 2 consideration of the motion that Bill C-25, an act to modernize employment and labour relations in the public service and to amend the Financial Administration Act and the Canadian Centre for Management Development Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the third time and passed; and on the motion that the question be now put.

Mr. Mac Harb (Ottawa Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to speak to Bill C-25, the public service modernization act.

Before I start I want to congratulate the minister, the minister's staff and all those who have participated in the development of the legislation. I also want to thank every public servant who works for the Government of Canada. I am sure members will agree with me that this country is well-served by the fine, high quality public servants who keep the government functioning and who provide quality service to Canadians.

The government has put tremendous effort into bringing about an act to, as one might say, put the house in order. Some of the key objectives of the bill are to ensure a transparent hiring process in the public service, to look at the issue of merit in the public service, to improve employee-employer relations, to deal with issues affecting the services that we provide Canadians and many other issues that will render the public service even more efficient in the way it conducts its business.

However, like every legislation that comes before the House, it goes to committee and consultation. As well, witnesses appear before committees with ideas and suggestions.

I must admit, Mr. Speaker, I am standing before you today a bit late with what I have to put before the House basically because the information came to my attention at a very late hour. It was after the House dealt with the report stage of Bill C-25, as well as after the committee had the chance to deal with the bill.

I had a meeting last week with a representative of the Public Service Alliance of Canada, Mr. Edward Cashman, who is the regional executive vice-president for the national capital region who was elected to this position. I want to congratulate him on his election and that of his colleagues who came with him to make a presentation concerning Bill C-25.

This was the first interaction I had with the representatives of the union on these issues. As far as I was concerned, there was widespread support for the bill. In essence, I concluded that because my office had not received any kind of a communication to the contrary. We did not receive the amount of calls we normally would have received on legislation that comes before the House.

Nonetheless, that is not to say that the concerns raised by Mr. Cashman, on behalf of the Public Service Alliance of Canada, are not important concerns for which the House needs to take note.

I have promised Mr. Cashman two things. The first was that I would put on the record some of the concerns that his group outlined and brought to my attention, and that I would speak with the minister and her office with regard to the points that the union reps raised.

The points that were raised were in three categories. One of the issues the union people raised dealt with merit. They were concerned that the changes to merit could create a situation where there could be abuse by managers when it came to staffing.

● (1045)

The second point raised by the union rep concerned essential services and the issue of voting. On the issue of essential services, they wanted to know what would constitute an essential service employee.

The union also had a concern on the notion of voting. If there is a strike vote, the union is mandated to notify all those who are in the work unit. Members of the union told me that this might be somewhat problematic in that in some cases when a strike vote is called they may or may not be able to communicate with every person who works in the unit simply because some of them may not be members of the union. As a result of that, they may have difficulties dealing with this issue.

I have raised all three points with the minister and she has assured me that, first, she is willing to meet with the union rep at the earliest possible opportunity; and second, she is eager to ensure that once the bill goes through the House and the policy is introduced to do the implementation, the employee reps will be included in the consultation process that will be taking place and that in fact their views will be heard. The minister is willing to address some of the points and hopefully she will provide answers that will meet the interests of the public servants, both in terms of employees as well as employers.

On the notion of merit, I have been told that the merit laws, by virtue of this legislation, have been made stronger than they were before.The clause that has been included in the legislation would not only ensure that employees meet the minimum and basic requirements, but that the employer looks for additional qualifications the potential employee may have, such as language skills, level of education and other talents that might be of use in the public service. It not only talks about the minimum requirements, which would bring it into harmony with what existed before, but it goes beyond that.

In other words, I wanted the employee to score a certain percentage, but also I wanted it to go beyond that. If they have the qualifications and could score even more that would be an asset and that would be taken into consideration. This was the explanation the minister provided to me. It is a positive thing to consider and to look at in a positive fashion.

However, in addition to that, I have been informed that in the event the agent of the employee, which is the union, has a concern about a specific item it would still have the ability to appeal it or question it. In this particular case I think it is a positive thing. It would give the employee rep the opportunity to question in the event something like that takes place.

● (1050)

The second concern raised by Mr. Cashman deals with the potential for abuse by an employer. Provisions in the act make it difficult for an employer to do that. In essence it strengthens the merit clause and makes it literally impossible for an employer to abuse its position. Should that take place, then the employee representative as well as the employee would have provisions under Bill C-25 to appeal and go to the next step.

I would like to raise the points of union representatives specifically and put them on the record for the interest of the House. While I know we are in third reading and there is no provision to introduce any type of amendment at this stage, I want to put them on the record because I promised Mr. Cashman I would do so.

In the section that deals with prohibitions and enforcement, division 14, the union asked for the following:

That Bill C-25 in Clause 2 be amended by deleting lines 11 to 17 on page 84.

That Bill C-25 in Clause 2 be amended by deleting line 20 on page 84 and replacing it with: "189(1) or section 195 is guilty of an".

That Bill C-25 in Clause 2 be amended by deleting line 28 to 29 on page 84 and replacing them with: "contravenes section".

That Bill C-25 in Clause 2 be amended by deleting lines 7 to 11 on page 85.

Then we move on to the merit clause. In essence the union would liked to have sees the following:

That Bill C-25 in Clause 12 be amended by deleting line 15 on page 126 and replacing it with: "person to be appointed meets the".

That Bill C-25 in Clause 12 be amended by deleting lines 19 to 29 on page 126.

That Bill C-25 in Clause 12 be amended by deleting line 6 on page 127 and replacing it with: "graph 30(2)(a)".

That Bill C-25 in Clause 12 be amended by replacing lines 36 and 37 on page 128 and replacing them with: "paragraph 30(2)(a)".

That Bill C-25 in Clause 12 be amended by replacing lines 40 and 41 on page 128 with: "-cations referred to in paragraph 30(2)(a), other than language".

That Bill C-25 in Clause 12 be amended by deleting lines 7 to 16 on page 129.

That Bill C-25 in Clause 12 be amended by deleting lines 34 to 40 on page 129.

All these amendments would have been in order if they had been made at the committee level. If in the event a member of Parliament was unable to introduce them under special circumstances, Mr. Speaker, you could have made a ruling whereby the amendments could have been introduced in the House during report stage.

Unfortunately that was not the case. The amendments did not come in at a time where it could have been possible to introduce them, either at committee or at report stage. Therefore, for the interest of the House, I have tabled them here. There may have been other amendments that did not come to my attention, and I would suggest that as the bill sees its way through the House on the way to the Senate, that the union representative will have an opportunity at that time to go to the Senate and make those suggestions there.

However I would like to stress the importance of the union working with members of Parliament on both sides of the House, like it happened in this case. Unfortunately, it arrived at the last minute.

● (1055)

I hope in the future the relations between both the employee representatives and the employers will move to the next step, and that is a positive cooperation, a dialogue, a cohesive interaction whereby the minister will be informed at an early stage when legislation is about to come before the House and where a discussion will take place in an atmosphere of willingness to move things forward in the best interests of both the union and the government.

I remember the Prime Minister once stating that the government looked at its public servants as being a part of the solution, not part of the problem. That is really what has defined the government, what has defined the actions of this minister and what has defined the actions of all members on this side of the House. We look at the public service employees as being a part of the solution. They are a part of the team that makes the country so great, one of the greatest countries in the world.

Having said all that, it is my hope that this legislation will go through the House and that at the earliest possible opportunity the union representatives will take the minister on her offer, which she made to me yesterday, to meet with them. The minister is willing to talk specifically with regard to the concerns that have been brought to my attention and that I have brought to the attention of the minister on their behalf. Specifically, they deal with some of the details and clarifications that are required in my view to bring about a positive conclusion to this legislation.

This is long overdue. We know the Auditor General raised a number of concerns dealing with the public service act and some of the provisions within that act. I am happy to see this coming before Parliament at a very opportune time, not only to deal with the concerns raised by the Auditor General in her latest report but to address some of the issues which need to be addressed as well.

I thank the House for giving me the opportunity to speak on this very important issue. I thank both the government as well as the union for giving me the opportunity to speak today.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague's speech. I find it rather strange that he presented us with a series of valid amendments or suggestions regarding the bill. Unfortunately, after going through the whole list, he said that under current House procedures, they were out of order. His intentions were good but, as we know, the road to hell is paved with good intentions.

In conclusion, he noted that the union had proposed amendments at the very last minute, and that in future there should be some kind of dialogue with the department and the minister beforehand.

In this regard, if we look at the history of labour relations in the federal public service, we see that dialogue is not the government's forte. It has always favoured strong arm tactics. What is happening today is that we have this bill and everybody will have to comply with it. I think the government is not giving unions the chance to engage in dialogue beforehand so that the act contains provisions that suit everybody.

What I see happening here is the government coming in at the very last minute and saying that the act is 35 years old and has to be revamped, without consulting the unions. Then, it tells them that they should have given notice earlier because now the proceedings in the House are so far advanced that amendments are no longer possible.

Should my colleague not acknowledge that in addition to its role as legislator, the government is assuming the right to impose its will? As he mentioned earlier, they want to clean up the public service. They come and say, "Here is what we have cooked up. You cannot change one iota of it because the procedures of the House will not allow it. End of discussion. Now you have to comply". I find that the government is pretty heavy-handed with this bill.

● (1100)

Mr. Mac Harb: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague has long been a member of this House, and he is very familiar with its procedures. He is well aware that a bill gets introduced at first reading and that it is referred to a committee after second reading. Then, the bill comes back before the House for consideration at the report stage. Finally, there is a debate at third reading, but no amendments may be proposed.

Second, I do not know if my hon. colleague was listening when I said that the minister responsible for this bill said unequivocally yesterday—during a discussion we had about issues raised by the union representatives—that she is very willing to meet with them and to consider how to address positively the issues raised and how to resolve them. Finally, if further clarification is needed, the minister and the government will provide it.

Third, with regard to the process the government followed in introducing this bill, my hon. colleague, who is an experienced parliamentarian, is well aware that discussions took place with public servants. This bill did not just spring up out of thin air. Discussions were held.

As to the report, the parliamentary committee had the opportunity to discuss it. The union reps had the opportunity to appear before the committee and to make specific amendments in this regard.

When all is said and done, I did my duty as a member, which is to convey the wishes of my constituents. In this case, out of respect and duty, I must raise these points in the House and make known the government's response. As I indicated, I was very pleased with the minister's answer and with the clarifications that she and her team made yesterday.

There will be opportunities for input during the implementation phase, and the government intends to involve the union reps in policy development. They will therefore be able to work with the employers to find specific solutions to specific issues raised by the union reps.

I do not agree with my colleague that the government does not have good relations with its employees. That is simply not the case. I was here when the Tories were in power and I remember the kind of relations that existed between public servants and their employers. It was very sad. I remember those days when more that 60,000 public servants picketed on Parliament Hill. Relations were not that wonderful.

The member knows that all that has now changed. We have created a very positive relationship. Dialogue continues with the union reps. Our colleagues from the government side, the members of the Liberal caucus, talk with the union reps on an ongoing basis and I personally met with some union reps last week.

● (1105)

I am here today to convey to my colleagues, including the opposition members, the opinion of the unions who wanted some issues raised Parliament. This is what I have done today.

I also had the opportunity to speak with the minister. She told me quite categorically that she would agree to meet with them to find a solution, particularly regarding certain specific issues, and that clarifications would be provided on other issues.

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one concern I have is it seems from the last discourse that the amendments put forth by the union were done in a fashion that they were late or in a time frame that did not provide the opportunity to make improvements to the bill. That is not entirely accurate. We know that over 100 amendments were defeated at the committee. I would like the hon. member to address that. Those amendments dealt with some of the concerns that he discussed and as the hon. member noted, would have improved the bill and would have taken care of those things. Why were they defeated by the government when they would have addressed those very points?

Mr. Mac Harb: Mr. Speaker, I am not a member of the committee. As well, I do not know the details of those amendments.

Sometimes an amendment dealing with an item comes before a committee and the amendment may have been dealt with through the legislation in one way or another. Other amendments may be redundant.

I do not know the details of the 100 amendments my colleague is talking about. I do know the three main concerns that the employees' reps have raised with me. They deal with the issue of merit. They deal with the issue of taking votes. They deal with the issue of essential services and when and how employees can go on strike and to what limit they can take that issue.

I would say that with all three points that I have raised with the minister, I am totally satisfied that when we go to the next step of implementing the legislation, they will be dealt with.

I would suggest to my colleague that the minister has made a very important point, in that she is willing to meet with the union to provide clarification in order to address some of the concerns that were raised.

● (1110)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this is truly an extraordinary opportunity for me to express my view this morning on Bill C-25. It is a bill that interests me tremendously, especially because its purpose is to change the culture in the public service.

Treasury Board wants to use this bill to deal with the constant reduction of the work force in the public service and the growing competition from the private sector.

With this bill, the government believes it could overcome problems relating to representation, the aging staff and professional skills.

Finally, the purpose of this bill is to improve the public's perception of the public service. There seems to be little interest in having a career in the public service because of its bad reputation. This results in poor recruitment. The goal of this bill is to change the approach with regard to the public's view of the public service.

It is also a substantial bill. We would have preferred to debate it in parts since it deals with human beings, the men and women in this work force that we are to manage, or the government is to manage.

It includes amendments, among other things, to the Financial Administration Act. This bill will also improve accountability through the tabling of reports. The President of the Treasury Board is required to prepare reports on the administration of the legislation in terms of human resources management, a report on the obligations that stem from the Employment Equity Act, and a report on the Treasury Board's powers under the Public Service Employment Act.

I felt the need to list these points simply to establish the purpose of this bill. We are disappointed because we know these objectives will not be met. This legislation is meant to make working in the public service an attractive prospect. Again, we doubt very much that these objectives will be met.

I will discuss two points, the amendments made to the Public Service Employment Act, and the fact that it is incumbent on the government as a responsible employer to ensure a healthy work environment where its employees are treated with dignity and respect.

My attention was immediately drawn to one particular provision, that is paragraph 30(2)(*b*) of the Public Service Employment Act, which reads as follows:

> —the Commission is satisfied that the person to be appointed meets the essential qualifications for the work to be performed, as established by the deputy head, including official language proficiency.

The Bloc Quebecois proposed an amendment to change this paragraph by deleting the word essential. We believe that the candidate should meet all the qualifications. Limiting the requirement to essential qualifications creates ambiguity regarding the proficiency level required. In other words, essential could be construed to mean minimal proficiency, and not maximum proficiency.

● (1115)

We fear that the deputy head or any senior official could make patronage appointments either by setting requirements that only one person can meet or by selecting among the candidates one who meets the essential qualifications without necessarily being the best candidate.

I would like to draw attention to a program concerning employment equity in the public service. In 1998, the government set up a temporary, four-year program which ended last year: the Employment Equity Positive Measures Program. This program provided the tools to support the aggressive application of employment equity principles in the workplace, thereby enhancing the representation of the four designated groups, that is, women, aboriginals, persons with disabilities and visible minorities.

This program also provided additional resources, services and funding to help departments and agencies turn their good intentions into lasting results.

The program costs were $10 million annually, which means that over four years, they totalled $40 million. This was to help the public service modernize, among other things. Imagine. Through this program, the Public Service Commission's centre for excellence was established and supported. Also, an electronic tool was developed in connection with employment equity positive practices.

When we talk about the public service and modernization, this is a first step. The bill before us does not include any of the outcomes of the Employment Equity Positive Measures Program, which cost $40 million.

This program included four components, three of which were managed and delivered by the Public Service Commission on behalf of the Treasury Board Secretariat. One was the Employment Equity Partnership Fund, the purposes of which were first to build the capacity for employment equity, second to promote a workplace which is supportive, and third to improve representativeness of the workforce and of course to improve retraining.

How is it that, after a program that cost $40 million and delivered a series of suggestions and proposals from public servants, none of this is to be found in the bill before us?

This bill does not guarantee that all the work that has been done through the Employment Equity Positive Measures Program to improve the representativeness and the distribution of designated groups will go on, since the word essential in clause 30(2)(*b*) will create confusion.

We spent $40 million to try to include people, train them, give them a position in the public service, but with the addition of this tiny word, essential, to the statement of qualifications, these people will not be able to benefit from employment equity. From now on, it will be a matter of choice, and officials will decide which qualifications are essential.

The basic requirements and the best skills will not necessarily be a factor. How sure can we be that we will protect these four designated groups under the Employment Equity Act? One has to wonder.

● (1120)

Before moving on to the other component, I would just like to point out to our colleague from Mississauga East, who has just spoken, that the Public Service Alliance sent us a little document on the eve of International Women's Day: an advertisement from the Monday, February 17 issue of *Hill Times*. It contains a demonstration to the effect that not everything to do with employment equity is necessarily respected—at any rate, not the wishes of Treasury Board as far as employment equity is concerned.

They told us that their union represents approximately 1,600 workers at the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, the majority of whom are women. In that department, they calculated the numbers of women and men, and realized that at the ministerial level there were five men and one woman, in addition to one secretary. There were three parliamentary secretaries, two men and one woman. In the minister's office there were four men and no women. As for assistant deputy ministers, there were six men and two women. This is all very revealing. In Bill C-25, the Public Service Modernization Act, perhaps the four designated groups ought to have been taken into account.

Now, I have a question, which I might have liked to ask the minister. When she drafted this bill, did she take into consideration the gender analysis. According to Status of Women Canada, this year $11 million were made available to the departments to do a gender analysis, in order to know how to draft legislation to reflect what is due to men and to women.

I wonder: with $40 million here and $11 million there, it seems there is money available. Yet there is no money to invest in our work force. Our colleague from Mississauga East has just said that public servants should be considered part of the solution. Indeed, they must be considered people, human beings entitled to a healthy environment.

I will continue with the second part of my speech, which deals with harassment. The Bloc Quebecois is very concerned about the concept of harassment that may exist in the workplace; indeed, psychological harassment should have been included in the provisions relating to this phenomenon.

With regard to this type of harassment in the public service, the latest numbers tell us that more than 21% of Canadian public servants are affected by harassment. Formal written complaints have been made. How many people in the federal public service do not dare to say a word because they are confronted with this famous oath of allegiance, the oath of confidentiality on what is happening within departments? This is a two edged sword. This famous oath of allegiance says that nothing that happens in the workplace must get beyond the workplace. A a result, people keep their mouths shut, say noything and go on being harassed.

I will get back later to the definition of psychological harassment. This type of harassment must be known and acknowledged by public service managers. The Bloc Quebecois had proposed amendments that would have made the implementation of the policy mandatory for each of the departments.

So I will give you a short definition of psychological harassment. It may happen through words, actions and behaviours that tend to put employees down, to belittle them by treating them as subordinates, to prevent them from getting ahead.

● (1125)

This form of violence shows up as workplace harassment, the abuse of power and the abuse of authority.

A little study was done. There is, of course a policy to deal with psychological harassment on the job, or harassment in the workplace. This policy originates with Treasury Board; it was introduced in 1994 and modernized in 2001. We might expect that, if there is a policy issued by the Treasury Board Secretariat, it would be applied everywhere, in all departments. Unfortunately, it was found that of 83 departments, only 7 truly applied the Treasury Board policy. The 76 others have their own policies, and it is not clear to what extent they apply any policy.

Each of these departments has different methods. Sometimes, the policy is applied or action is taken when there is a formal complaint; in other departments, when there are oral complaints, they are dealt with. But that is the extent of it.

I would simply like to remind the House that in terms of harassment, if the process does not work at the departmental level, the person being harassed cannot charge the harasser. Those who are harassed become isolated, fall silent, fall ill, and that costs Treasury Board money.

Many of these policies are incomplete. They do not specify the timeframe within which managers must resolve a case of harassment. Several cases were brought to our attention and, in each instance, managers did not act diligently. Quite often, managers are unaware of this policy.

Also, many harassment complaints have yet to be resolved. Some fall under directive 255, from 1994, and others come under the new policy that came into force on June 1, 2001. If these complaints remain unresolved, it is because many managers and public servants have little or no interest in respecting other people or their rights.

Some 40% of departments adopted in full the policy as of June 2001. When I say 40% adopted it, they did so in writing, but only seven departments apply it. This is significant. It means that there are public servants—over 30%, according to our figures—who are being harassed and do not report it. It could be vertical harassment, meaning by their bosses, or it could be horizontal, meaning by co-workers. Unfortunately, the new bill makes no mention of this.

In closing, I want to say that it is surprising that Bill C-25, which seeks among other things a change in culture and the improvement of labour-management relations, does not ensure a more effective application of the policy on the prevention and resolution of harassment in the workplace.

If the minister truly wants to change the culture of the public service, if she wants to make it an attractive place to work, she must ensure, among other things, the continuity of the employment equity positive measures program, which cost $40 million. She should ensure, as a responsible employer, that all employees have access to a workplace that is not only free of harassment, but that recognizes the existence of harassment and that implements measures and ethical practices to protect workers, like any other responsible employer.

● (1130)

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ) Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by congratulating my colleague for her excellent speech, which has captured our attention, particularly its second part dealing with harassment.

My colleague has very considerable expertise on the issue, and society needs women like her to advance the cause of women. I believe there can be no just and equitable society if women are treated inequitably.

Statistics still demonstrate very clearly that women continue to earn less than men with equal skills and education. There are also a number of other factors which lead me to conclude that women are not yet treated on an equal basis with men in our society. I think that, with women such as my colleague, we can advance this cause and move toward a fairer and more equitable society.

I will focus particularly on the second aspect she addressed in her speech: harassment. There is psychological harassment, but there is also sexual harassment. Judging by the Quebec labour department's 1999 report, it is my impression that the government of Quebec is a bit ahead of the federal government as far as the issue of harassment is concerned. I feel that they have taken this issue seriously, far more seriously than the federal government, which seems not to be particularly concerned about it. Moreover, as my colleague has said, a number of amendments have been proposed and rejected by the government.

I would like to hear from my colleague as to whether she thinks I am wrong in my analysis, or whether she shares my opinion that the Government of Quebec is well ahead of the federal government as far as harassment is concerned.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague from Saint-Jean for this question. Indeed, the issue of psychological harassment is a new, but important concept.

I will draw an analogy, which may seem strange, but we talk about harassment in schools where it is referred to as taxing. We could perhaps talk about workplace harassment, which can take the form of repeated actions or simply something which has been going on for a very long time and which undermines people's health and psychological well-being and causes them to become ill. This is very costly to society.

Moreover, my colleague from Saint-Jean is right. The Government of Quebec is the third in the world to have passed, in December, legislation to address workplace harassment. We can be proud that Quebec passed such legislation.

It is visionary legislation that was not embraced by all employers at first. After six months to put it in place and work the bugs out, now employers are saying, "How right it was to pass this legislation", because an employer is responsible for the physical and psychological well-being of an employee in the workplace.

Hon. members know that, under the Criminal Code, employees can take their employer to court if, indeed, the employer did not react quickly enough on a harassment issue.

That having been said, there are two countries in the world which have legislation against harassment. France was the first to introduce such legislation, five or six years ago. Timid steps were taken and, in France, they are now changing this legislation somewhat to give it more teeth. Belgium was the second country to introduce legislation, but then again, this legislation being patterned on the French legislation, it is timid.

We hope that a bill can soon be passed in this House to make Canada the first country in the world to have legislation which takes into account whistleblowers, protects them and really addresses the issue so that employees do not experience harassment.

At present, in Canada, there is a policy. But as I demonstrated earlier, it is either not enforced, poorly or sporadically enforced, or enforced any old way. I find that appalling. While employees are being harassed, their employers, the managers, are doing nothing about it. They are not being mean; they just do not know how to recognize harassment. People are starting to talk about it.

I think that, eventually, as an employer, the public service will have to pay attention to the physical environment to ensure that the working climate is healthy and that assistance can be provided to employees.

● (1135)

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Terrebonne—Blainville for raising that aspect of Bill C-25 in terms of the impact on our public service and what makes our public service a great public service. The member has often raised in this place issues on behalf of the interests of women, particularly with regard to abuse and harassment, and in this regard harassment in the workplace.

I do not think there is any disagreement in any quarter of the House that harassment of employees, regardless of gender quite frankly, is unacceptable. However the member will also know that we cannot legislate behaviour.

The member's final comments indicated that the responsible approach is education, because people do not know. It is not just those who would perpetrate harassment who have not been sensitized to the fact that their actions are harassing in nature, but also those who are harassed may not recognize or understand what they can do or how it should be done.

I will accept the member's representations with regard to the number of cases that may not have been resolved quickly. I agree with her that to go to court takes far too long to resolve those kinds of issues. We should also be aware that two years ago in the last collective agreement with PSAC, $7 million was allocated for a joint training program for employees and for so-called management on this very subject.

It raises the question as to whether it is the Government of Canada that should take these steps or the Public Service Commission and the employee representation that should raise those issues more forcefully, or continue to raise them more forcefully, so that programs, as necessary, will be implemented to mitigate and attempt to eliminate harassment in the workplace.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Mr. Speaker, you know that there have been 498 formal complaints of harassment in the federal public service during the year 2000-01. These are the complaints that have really been filed because they are signed. Right now, some people who are being harassed do not file complaints because they are afraid.

I will give you an example. You said that $2 million have been spent to prevent harassment. The policy is not being implemented; only seven departments implement it. I could give you many examples. I even put questions here, in this House, to the Solicitor General of Canada, who is responsible for the Correctional Service of Canada. Some people have come to my office because they were found in a fetal position under their desk as a result of harassment.

Here is how the system works. The person who is being harassed tells his immediate supervisor, who has to intervene. If he does not, the complaint goes to the region. If the region does not intervene, the complaint goes a bit higher. Except that each individual decides whether there is harassment. But when one is not competent, how can one determine whether there is harassment?

My answer is somewhat brief. I would have liked to elaborate, but I will come back to it another time.

● (1140)

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to speak to Bill C-25, but we see that the government is not interested in the deliberations at this time, so I move:

That this House do now adjourn.

The Deputy Speaker: 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.

● (1225)

[*Translation*]

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

(Division No. 175)

YEAS

Members

Abbott	Bachand (Saint-Jean)
Bailey	Barnes (Gander—Grand Falls)
Bourgeois	Breitkreuz
Burton	Cadman
Cardin	Chatters
Comartin	Crête
Dalphond-Guiral	Davies
Doyle	Duncan
Elley	Epp
Forseth	Gagnon (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay)
Gallant	Gaudet
Gauthier	Girard-Bujold
Godin	Gouk
Grewal	Guay
Guimond	Hanger
Harper	Harris
Hearn	Herron
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)	Hill (Macleod)
Hinton	Jaffer
Johnston	Keddy (South Shore)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Laframboise
Lanctôt	Lill
Loubier	Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni)
Marceau	Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	Masse
McDonough	Meredith
Merrifield	Mills (Red Deer)

Moore
Paquette
Picard (Drummond)
Rajotte
Reynolds
Sauvageau
Schmidt
Solberg
St-Hilaire
Stoffer
Toews
White (North Vancouver)
Yelich– — 79

Nystrom
Perron
Proctor
Reid (Lanark—Carleton)
Rocheleau
Schellenberger
Skelton
Sorenson
Stinson
Strahl
Vellacott
Williams

NAYS

Members

Adams
Anderson (Victoria)
Augustine
Bakopanos
Bélanger
Bennett
Bevilacqua
Blondin-Andrew
Bonwick
Bradshaw
Bulte
Caccia
Caplan
Carroll
Catterall
Charbonneau
Collenette
Cotler
Cuzner
Dhaliwal
Easter
Finlay
Frulla
Godfrey
Harb
Harvey
Jackson
Jordan
Keyes
Knutson
Laliberte
Lebel
Lee
Lincoln
Macklin
Malhi
Marcil
McGuire
McLellan
Minna
Murphy
Nault
Normand
O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)
Owen
Pagtakhan
Parrish
Peschisolido
Pettigrew
Pillitteri
Price
Redman
Regan
Rock
Savoy
Scott
Sgro
Simard
St-Jacques
St. Denis
Szabo
Thibault (West Nova)
Tirabassi
Torsney
Vanclief
Whelan

Alcock
Assadourian
Bagnell
Barnes (London West)
Bellemare
Bertrand
Binet
Bonin
Boudria
Bryden
Byrne
Cannis
Carignan
Castonguay
Cauchon
Coderre
Comuzzi
Cullen
DeVillers
Dion
Eggleton
Fontana
Fry
Goodale
Harvard
Hubbard
Jennings
Karetak-Lindell
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Kraft Sloan
Lastewka
LeBlanc
Leung
Longfield
Mahoney
Maloney
McCallum
McKay (Scarborough East)
McTeague
Mitchell
Myers
Neville
O'Brien (Labrador)
O'Reilly
Pacetti
Paradis
Péric
Peterson
Phinney
Pratt
Proulx
Reed (Halton)
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Saada
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Speller
St-Julien
Stewart
Telegdi
Thibeault (Saint-Lambert)
Tonks
Valeri
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Wilfert
Wood– — 133

PAIRED

Nil

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to debate Bill C-25. As a matter of fact, I must say that last week I was afraid that it might come before the House, as I had promised my labour friends that I would speak to it.

In a previous life, before I entered politics, I was a union representative in my work place. I started out rather timidly. My workplace was not very big. There were around 200 workers. During the summer, there were a lot of students too.

Why did I get involved with the labour movement? I will tell you a little bit about my personal history by way of explanation. I found there were a lot of injustices in my workplace. I say injustice because I believed the employer was abusing certain people. I called it "employer tyranny". I could see also that some people were treated differently than others and I thought it essential that there be something to counterbalance the employer tyranny, management and personnel management.

It happened very simply around a table. People told me, "Claude, we would like you to become president of the union". I agreed. As a result, I was involved with labour unions for 20 years not only in my workplace but also at the local and regional levels, where I assumed certain responsibilities. This is why today I am able to talk about this type of bill.

Today, we believe we should vote against Bill C-25 because of the way it was put to the House of Commons and dealt with in committee.

As a matter of fact, this is not the first time such a thing has happened in a committee. When the opposition suggests valid amendments, often the government majority will just turn them all down. This morning, I even heard some of my colleagues suggest some changes to the bill, and they were told on procedural grounds that it was too late to put them forward. However, while it might have been too late to do so, we put forward amendments in committee and they were flatly rejected.

I have been here for almost ten years now and I have found that the Liberal government is not a government for workers, and this is not the first time that I have said this. It is against workers and I have several examples to illustrate this.

In our first term, Parliament was reconvened to pass special legislation to force rail workers back to work. Supposedly, we were given all kinds of time to speak our minds on the subject. We said, "Madam Speaker, we are moving too fast, the government wants to pass special legislation too quickly and we have not given the union and management enough time to work out their issues". The result was that people had to go back to work under the yoke of special legislation.

The same thing happened to Vancouver dock workers, where all kinds of national reasons were invoked, and where the government said, "The west coast is being paralyzed, we must force employees back to work". Once again, the parties were not given time, or enough time, to try to resolve the dispute themselves.

The same is true when it comes to federal trusteeship. There is another example, from my riding, in fact. Workers, or rather former workers, at Singer—since they are before the courts right now—were demanding money from the government, which was supposed to act as a trustee and protect their pension fund. The federal government allowed the company to dip into its surplus. The result is that today, these people, whose average age is 85, under this system of trusteeship, find themselves making $10, $15 or $20 a month. It makes no sense.

Instead of telling the company to dip into its surplus, to stop making contributions, the government missed the opportunity to ensure that the surplus could be used to help Singer employees, which would have made their retirement much rosier than it is presently.

And then, to our amazement, after we asked a dozen questions, we understood why the government had refused to return the money to the Singer employees. It wanted to get its hands on the surplus in the federal government employees' fund. Around four or five years ago, the government said, "We think this surplus is ours", and it grabbed it.

● (1230)

To me, all this means that, when it comes to workers, the only thing that the government is interested in is collecting taxes. It is not interested in providing benefits to these workers through special or effective measures. We have evidence once again with the antiscab legislation. We want something equivalent to what the Quebec government has, that is the banning of scabs, and the government refuses and even argues that unions agree with it that the legislative framework must remain unchanged. This is yet more blatant evidence that the government does not care about workers.

So what is happening today with Bill C-25? The government now argues that the act is 35 years old. The government says that this act must be changed. Now, we find ourselves with a bill that has the same regressive view toward workers. This is why the Bloc Quebecois is opposed to it. For numerous reasons, this bill does not contain the elements required to maintain a good work environment.

In labour relations, there are some very important themes we should always keep in mind. They are also the themes in fashion in labour relations today. One is the issue of corporate culture. Here we see the state as employer, with thousands of workers at its disposal, and the employer's response to problems of corporate culture is to create a bill. Another issue was the way the bill was introduced. There has been very little consultation with the unions. That is completely congruent with the position and tactics the federal government has been employing for many years in its relations with the federal public service unions.

I do not think a bill can make corrections to a corporate culture. A corporate culture is imposed from the top down, starting with the Department of Labour or the Treasury Board. It is then reflected in the delegation of powers to local administrators.

Unfortunately, what we have seen for 35 years, and what is still true today, is that there is no respect for the workers. I know something about that. In my riding there is a military base and an agricultural research station; their employees are all federal public servants. The attitudes in these workplaces are very difficult to live with.

As a former union officer, I have a great deal of trouble accepting that in this corporate culture it is the local administrators who impose their views on the workers. They care nothing for any grievance procedure. They will always object to any and all employee demands. Because of this, grievances often have to go all the way to the top level—and that often is quite costly—instead of the employer investing in employee recognition.

One of the reasons given by the President of Treasury Board during her introduction of this bill was that there were recruitment problems in the federal public service. It is not surprising that there are problems. It will take more than a bill to correct a regressive attitude toward workers. There must be a change in corporate culture and this is not necessarily achieved with a little legislation.

The government must recognize and respect its federal public service. It must prove this on a daily basis and with a legislative framework that should be much more open. This means that, when changes to a workplace need to be made, the union must be consulted. The union must be respected. After all, it, and not the employer, represents the workers. The employer likely represents Treasury Board or any other department with federal employees. So, the union must be recognized, and it is the means through which employees should have more say. It is not about handing down measures, imposing them and saying, "Now, we have legislation. This is what is in the act and you are going to implement it".

With regard to consultations and the unions, at a senior level, they failed, there were practically no consultations. And today, the unions must appeal to members of Parliament. Each of us has, in turn, received phone calls asking us to try to block Bill C-25.

● (1235)

They realized that the attempts to improve the bill in committee, through amendments, failed almost entirely; perhaps one or two amendments were agreed to. So, the business culture cannot be changed by a bill.

As for the bargaining process, let us consider what has happened since the federal public service and the government started bargaining. In the past ten years, I have taken part in at least two bargaining sessions with the federal public service. What happens? The government, which is the employer, is also the legislator. It continues to maintain draconian positions when it comes to the unions. It is impossible to bargain logically. Either the government drags out the bargaining process or else it starts, after some time, to threaten its employees with special legislation.

We know what special legislation means. It means astronomical fines for individuals, the union and union leaders. No one is exempt from this. It is simple, either the government drags its feet at the table or it takes a completely draconian and closed approach to the union. Then we get closer and closer to a black hole, that is special legislation. I gave a few examples earlier of the rail workers strike and the strike at the Port of Vancouver. This does not include all the so-called projects set up by the government for the workers or the non-responses it gives to the workers. I also talked about that earlier.

As for the grievance process, let us not be under any illusions. I think that in matters of arbitration the government will not budge. The only recourse employees have is to file a grievance. I know this from experience. There are hardly any discussions between the union and the employer. The latter is not interested in negotiating anything to do with accommodation on the work site. It says, "I am the local administrator". I went through the whole bill and took note of the powers that are given to local administrations. It is unbelievable to see how the employer has complete control of the workplace.

The employer might say to the employee, "If you are not happy, file a grievance. I know it will take years before it is settled. If we lose, we will appeal. We will take it further". The employee waits for years for justice. Often, employees give up because they see they are at a dead end.

As far as essential services are concerned, this is another example I have seen in this bill. The employer is the one that determines essential services. That is just great for a union. I have already seen employers in my province announce, "In our workplace, 100% of services are essential services. Staff has been cut to a minimum and we cannot afford to have a single person absent".

Now imagine what will happen in federal government workplaces if the word comes down from local administrators that 100% of services are essential services. What means will be left to employees who want to object and force progress at the bargaining table? None whatsoever. All of them are expected to report to work the next day, because 100% of services have been designated essential.

So, in this bill the employer has total control over training, learning, and retraining. He can decide which employees in which units—ones of which he is particularly fond—are to be freed up from work and paid to take training. To the less favoured, he announces, "You keep working. There is no training for you. We are the ones to decide who gets training and retraining".

This again makes no sense whatsoever. The employer also has the upper hand as far as bonuses and rewards are concerned. In other words, he can authorize lump sum payments or take a certain number of favoured employees out to a restaurant. There will be a great deal of arbitrary judgments involved. All this is what I have fought against in the past, and here it is again in this bill. It is arbitrary and employer-biased, from *A* to *Z*.

The same goes for disciplinary measures and sanctions. It is the employer who will decide, on his terms, what sanctions and disciplinary measures to apply. I have seen plenty of these also, of all kinds.

● (1240)

I have a lot of people come to my office and say, "I am sick and tired. My employer is constantly on my back even though I am not any worse than the rest of them in such and such unit on the military base or at Agriculture Canada or the research centre. I have been disciplined for a certain behaviour and colleagues with the same behaviour have not".

Again, this is an example of the employer's arbitrariness. Employers will be able to determine what the needs of the public service are. They may make mistakes. Again, there is no mention of negotiating that with the union. Is anybody in a better position than front line workers to say, "This is what we believe we need in the near future. We are at work everyday in the field and we can see how things are evolving. We can see that service is diminishing. We can see that the demand for service is going up, and this is what we suggest". But this is not how it will happen. The needs of the federal public service will be determined by the employer, who will decide, "In this area, there will be cuts. In that area, there will be increases". The employer will proceed without necessarily having the support of the union and without necessarily consulting the union.

It would have been proper to recognize the unions by saying that there should be an agreement or negotiations between the two parties before any cut or increase in service went ahead. As I said before, is anybody in a better position than workers to assess that? They are the ones who are doing the work day in and day out.

As for the power to determine job qualifications, I have also seen that abused. I have seen job ads that practically say, "We are looking for a 25-year-old woman". It was fair as long as it did not state that the qualifications also included blond hair and blue eyes.

A good number of people are automatically disqualified. So, employers can determine the job qualifications, and in doing so they can also choose the person they want for the job. If this is not the employer being arbitrary, then I do not know what it is.

There is also the whole issue of merit. Who is going to assess merit? The bill refers to essential qualifications. The employer is the one who determines them, and then the employer will say that a person cannot be hired because he or she does not merit the position. Obviously, we will be told that if employees are not happy, all they have to do is file a grievance. However, given what I explained earlier regarding the grievance process, the employee will suffer the injustice for years before an arbitrator rules that he or she is right or wrong. I am citing these examples to demonstrate that all of the powers are in the hands of the employer.

As for psychological harassment, there is an employee from the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency who lives in my riding and works in Lacolle. He has seen me regularly because he has been subject to psychological harassment for years because of his political convictions. This person had to put up with systematic abuse from his employer as well as other workers who had the same political beliefs as his employer, and treated him terribly. This person could complain to his immediate supervisor at the regional level until he was blue in the face, nothing changed.

I would have liked to talk about whistleblowers and provisions to protect those who witness abuse in government. Unfortunately, this bill does not contain any such provisions, and the amendments to include them were all rejected.

The same applies to official languages. Contrary to the Act to promote physical activity and sport, there are no provisions on official languages in this bill.

Lastly, we moved almost 120 amendments to try to improve this bill. The Liberals rejected them all.

To close, for all the above reasons, the Bloc Quebecois does not support Bill C-25, and we will vote against it.

● (1245)

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, thank you for giving me the opportunity to ask a question of the member from the Bloc who I know has been very active on this case file. The Bloc has put over 120 amendments because Bill C-25 is so deficient with a number of different working relationship issues that it will make the services more difficult for people being employed by the federal government.

This should be an opportunity to create a bill that will improve morale and increase the efficiency of the workers. The problems, as outlined by the member, will lead to more difficult times I believe.

There are a couple of things the government could have done to fix things. One was the amendment by the member from the New Democratic Party, the member for Winnipeg Centre, on whistleblowing. We believe is a very important issue. We have seen the scandals that have plagued the government for the last few years, the waste and other different problems. The government is spending a tonne of money on the RCMP right now to investigate these matters, which costs the taxpayers.

We were hoping to get some type of amendment to the bill to provide for whistleblowing. I will quickly read the three major parts to it. The Auditor General would be involved when a wrongful act or omission is:

> (a) an offence against an Act of Parliament or legislature of a province or any instrument issued under the authority of any such Act;
>
> (b) likely to cause a significant waste of public money;
>
> (c) likely to endanger the public health or safety of the environment...

It goes on further to explain how whistleblowers would be protected so they would be assured that they would not lose their jobs, or would not be intimidated, or would not lose promotion, all those different things. It would save hopefully a lot of the problems which we have had in the past.

I know the hon. member has a number of different amendments from his party that were put forth, many of them that could actually have made this a good piece of legislation. It has not happened.

This is an amendment we had, and I would like to hear his remarks about it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for giving me this opportunity to talk about whistleblowers. And what an evocative term that is. It would have been very important that the bill include mechanisms to protect these people.

At present, the oath of allegiance is often cited. One must be careful not to say too much; there is a cloud of secrecy surrounding all decisions, as if they were state secrets. At present, government employees who are given tasks which are against their personal ethics can do nothing about it, except resort to the brown envelope system. I am referring to the envelopes one can slide under someone's door to provide details about a given situation.

But why not do things in the open, transparently? For instance, why not allow employees who feel that their ethics are being compromised and that people are going too far to say so? Why not put in place the whistleblower protections necessary? Because they know what might happen to them if they blow the whistle and there is no protection in place. It may well spell the end of their career in the public service.

I think that the government has missed a great opportunity. Recently, there have been scandals where it might have been good for us, as a society, to have public servants say, "Look, what we are being asked to do is not right". There has been much talk about the sponsorship scandal. There has also been the HRDC scandal, with the billion dollars that disappeared.

Had public servants been protected under a bill like this one, it would probably have saved the government and the taxpayers money. With transparency, the matters could have been resolved and the wrongdoing stopped before it was too late, as in the two scandals I just mentioned.

Once again, the New Democratic Party and the Bloc Quebecois brought in amendments to try and define the concept of whistleblowing, so that problems could be dealt with quickly. Unfortunately, the federal government and the government members rejected these amendments out of hand.

● (1250)

[*English*]

Mr. Bob Speller (Haldimand—Norfolk—Brant, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to refer to comments made previously by some of my colleagues. They essentially stated that they thought that the bill was going in the right direction. However they, like myself, have heard over the last couple of days from constituents who are concerned with the fact that the oath of allegiance would be taken out of the legislation.

I certainly have received a number of phone calls, e-mails and faxes from constituents who feel that part of the traditions of Canada, part of what we particularly in rural Canada have believed, are somehow slipping away and that their voice on this is not being heard. I want to assure them, as I can assure all Canadians, that we on this side of the House have heard them. I have had the opportunity to speak with the minister on this issue, as have a number of my colleagues. We will be looking at this issue further.

Recognizing all that the member said about the importance of protecting people who may want to speak out at times but also making sure that the government can function in certain ways, what does he feel about the practice of an oath of allegiance, particularly in terms of a civil servant giving a commitment to the head of state of a country?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand: Madam Speaker, if the oath of allegiance could be an oath of allegiance to the Canadian taxpayers, I would not have much trouble with that. But an oath of allegiance to the Queen or the Prime Minister—I think it is not incompatible. We can certainly keep the oath of allegiance, but we also need to include a provision in the bill that would protect whistleblowers.

When public servants take an oath of allegiance, they must always remember that they are there to serve the Canadian taxpayer. Once public servants have taken an oath of allegiance and they are asked to do things that go too far, things that are contrary to the interests of taxpayers, I think there must be provisions for them to take action and be protected.

I do not see this as incompatible. On the contrary, I think that permitting public servants to blow the whistle on actions they think are wrong would be a significant counterweight to the oath of allegiance. I think that there is no incompatibility at all. I think it is an element that could be added to the oath of allegiance.

[*English*]

Ms. Wendy Lill (Dartmouth, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to Bill C-25. We in the House know how important this legislation is. There are some 170,000 civil servants in the country and I am told that if the RCMP, the armed forces and several others are added to that figure, the number gets up to almost half a million workers. This is an important piece of legislation that involves 16 bargaining units. We have a lot of work to do on this front to make sure we have a healthy and vibrant public service.

The role of the civil service has been the subject of no fewer than 37 indepth studies in the last 40 years. It is something that we certainly are trying to get right, but I am not sure how successful we have been.

I have received many letters, as have my colleagues, from people in the public service who have described the contents of Bill C-25 as a slap in the face. I would like to deal with some of the specific problems they have talked about, but first I would like to give a bit of a context for the bill.

We have to keep in mind that the 1990s was a terrible decade for our public service employees. There were seven or eight years of wage freezes with zero per cent increases. There was total devastation with the program review, where one-third of the civil servants were laid off. Many workers were demoralized by job cutbacks. Even though the civil service was reduced by one-third, the amount of work did not change. Employees were struggling with giving service to the public with fewer resources and fewer people to do the job. MPs know that this is the case because we see and hear from our constituents constantly about voicemail and never hearing a human being's voice at the other end of a government phone line because there have been so many cutbacks.

The ultimate insult was when the former president of the Treasury Board took the entire $30 billion surplus out of the employees' pension plan without even considering the fact that a surplus in a pension plan is the property of the employees. A pension plan should be viewed as wages being held in trust until such time as they are needed. When the pension plan went into surplus, the entire surplus of $30 billion was taken out of the employees' pension plan.

The government views surpluses very differently than the New Democratic Party does. In our time here we have certainly seen the massive EI surplus which has grown and grown over the last decade. That money also has not gone toward the purposes for which it was intended. It has gone into general revenues. At the same time a number of unemployed Canadians find that they are unable to collect EI because of the tightening of eligibility rules. The last I heard, only 40% of unemployed Canadians were able to receive EI.

A couple of years ago, the CLC estimated the amount of revenues taken out of Canadian cities because of cuts to EI. At that time the hit for my own community of Dartmouth was estimated to be $20 million. There would be $20 million less per year to be spent in our economy, to be used to support families, to provide a level of security at one of the most difficult junctures in people's lives, that is, when they are faced with unemployment.

The EI surplus also has disappeared. That money has been thrown into general revenues and is not being utilized for the purposes for which it was intended.

As I have said, during the process called program review in which the former finance minister got rid of the deficit, one-third of our civil servants were laid off. In my community of Dartmouth, there are thousands of families in which one or both spouses work for the federal public service. There are offices for DND, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Parks Canada, HRDC, the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, Heritage Canada, Environment Canada, Canada Post, ACOA, which is the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, and the Department of Veterans Affairs, just to name a few.

● (1255)

We have the regional headquarters for the National Film Board. Until the deep cuts in the 1990s, it was a very important production centre for Atlantic filmmakers and a training ground for young, talented creators getting their start in film. Like dozens of other important government agencies, the Film Board saw devastating cuts in the 1990s. Many people were forced to take a package a number of years before they wanted to leave, stopping them in mid-career when they were just reaching their potential in their field. It is a tragedy how much collective wisdom and knowledge has been lost because of the government's shortsighted program review which saw thousands and thousands of dedicated and caring public servants go out the door.

Now there is Bill C-25, another bill to modernize the public service. The question is how successful is this effort? It falls short in many very important areas and I would like to mention some of them.

Bill C-25 waters down the merit principle by allowing only one person with the essential qualifications of a position to be considered for the job and removing relative merit from the public service employment act. This means that a manager could easily appoint one of his or her favourites to a position.

Bill C-25 also limits the grounds for complaints in a staffing process to abuse of authority and language of choice. Whether or not candidates were tested in their language of choice will be easy to prove, but abuse of authority is almost impossible to prove. This means that very few individuals will be able to successfully challenge any staffing decision that is made.

Bill C-25 also broadens the definition of essential services and gives the employer the exclusive right to determine the level and frequency of services during a strike. This means that the right of strike will be severely curtailed, if not removed completely.

Bill C-25 as it presently stands also gives the employer control of the designations process in a way that makes it difficult, if not impossible, to know which employees are designated and which are not. This means that there will be more problems on the picket line, not fewer.

Bill C-25 also calls for a striking worker who, perhaps unknowingly, prevents a designated worker from entering the workplace to be convicted of a summary offence. This means that the government does not trust its own workers to act responsibly.

Another area that is of very great concern to the New Democrats is that Bill C-25 continues to exclude fundamental workplace issues, such as staffing and classification from collective bargaining. This means that the government has no real interest in working more collectively with unions.

We have heard from some of our Bloc colleagues and also from members of the NDP who have worked hard in committee to try to get some of these important issues addressed. We see again and again a government which we do not believe recognizes the important contributions that the public service makes. Canada's public servants dedicate so much of their lives and talents to make this country work. They make our trains run on time and deliver our mail. Our military, coast guard, immigration and postal services are the meaning of this country and public servants work together to provide those services. The government is not giving the public service the due that is required.

The NDP and the Public Service Alliance of Canada have raised issues in committee, such as the merit principle, grievance procedures, the definition of essential services, strike breaking procedures, staffing and classification for collective bargaining. It is clear that until these issues are dealt with satisfactorily, we will not be able to support Bill C-25 as it currently is drafted.

● (1300)

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

Some hon. members: Question.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And more than five members having risen:

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

And the bells having rung:

● (1305)

Mr. Dale Johnston: Madam Speaker, since there is a vote already scheduled for 3 o'clock this afternoon, I suggest we defer this vote.

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

* * *

PENSION ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-31, an act to amend the Pension Act and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Superannuation Act, as reported (without amendment) from the committee.

Hon. Paul DeVillers (for the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Secretary of State (Science, Research and Development) moved that the bill be concurred in.

(Motion agreed to)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): When shall the bill be read a third time? By leave, now?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Hon. Paul DeVillers (for the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Secretary of State (Science, Research and Development) moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Bob Wood (Nipissing, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased that today the House starts third reading debate on Bill C-31, an act to amend the Pension Act and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Superannuation Act.

The fast turnaround time from its introduction on April 10 and the speed with which the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs gave it unanimous approval on May 8 clearly reflects how strongly we all feel for the members of our Canadian Forces and the RCMP.

Thus, when they are sent to areas of operations of elevated risk, all of us are one in the conviction that they should have the most comprehensive coverage and the speediest access possible to disability pension and also health benefits. That is exactly what Bill C-31 accomplishes. Let me briefly recap the highlights of the bill.

For decades now, Canadian service personnel have served abroad in areas of elevated risk designated as special duty areas, or SDAs, as part of United Nations peacekeeping activities for which Canada has become renowned. Quite rightly, they receive disability protection 24 hours a day, 7 days a week when they serve in these designated areas, but the administrative process to officially designate such an area is unduly lengthy and can take up to several months.

The bill before us today will help relieve the anxiety of our service personnel and their families by speeding up the process.

An SDA can quickly be designated by the Minister of National Defence, or the Solicitor General in the case of the RCMP, in consultation with the Minister of Veterans Affairs, and thereby give peace of mind to them before they are sent out for deployment. In fact, the bill extends coverage to include travel to and from special designated areas. Simply speeding up the process does not help those who are similarly at elevated risk while serving inside Canada or in assignments that cannot be geographically described as falling within a special duty area.

The bill now creates a new service category called special duty operation. This new designation recognizes that the face of war and the other challenges to peace and security have undergone tremendous change. Geography no longer offers non-combatant nations a cocoon of safety. Terrorism, in all its forms and disguises, presents a real and a present danger. We may never know where or in what form terrorism may strike next.

It is to this less easily definable battlefield that Canada sends out her men and women in uniform to protect us. Often the enemy is hard to identify, the lines of conflict are not clearly known and the nature of danger is difficult to determine. The new SDO designation takes into account the fluidity of such operations abroad and within our country. These operations are just as hazardous as special duty areas.

It is important to emphasize that special duty operations can encompass situations within our own borders. Think of the devastating floods and the ice storms we have experienced in recent times in Canada, or of the dangers of search and rescue operations. They expose our uniformed citizens to greater than usual danger.

Just as with special designated areas, this piece of legislation also provides RCMP personnel who serve in special designated operations with the same degree of coverage as their military counterparts.

A large spectrum of military operations could be covered by an SDA or an SDO designation. They include armed conflicts in missions conducted under the auspices of the United Nations and NATO and within coalitions of like-minded countries. Domestically, operations authorized under the Emergencies Act or the National Defence Act could also trigger an SDO designation covering such eventualities as disaster relief operations and in-Canada anti-terrorism service.

The spectrum of RCMP operations that could be similarly designated runs a parallel but not necessarily identical track. These operations could include police service within armed conflict situations, again under the auspices of the UN operations abroad, where the officers would be exposed to elevated levels of risk over a specific period of time. These situations might well include activities aimed at re-establishing social order, rebuilding social institutions and offering police training and services to wartorn nations trying to re-establish civil order.

● (1310)

The bill allows for the provision of the best coverage possible for members of the Canadian Forces and RCMP sent to areas of operations of elevated risk, and their families. A grateful and caring nation takes it upon herself to provide this as a duty of pride. I thank all my colleagues in the House for their unanimous support for this bill and ask members to give it swift passage today.

Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague has given an excellent summation of the bill. There are a few points I want to point out to those who may be listening in.

The bill is probably the most modern approach that we could have taken following the awful events of 9/11. It is designed to meet the needs of this decade. It is also designed to meet the needs of a different type of police force, both at home and abroad, so what used to take up to almost a year can now be accomplished with speedy resolution, and we might say within days. That is the way it would be under this bill.

I do not think anyone could raise opposition to the bill. It is modern, it has quick resolution and it deals with only three departments. Therefore, the bill is designed for today. No one in the House, I am sure, would oppose it. In discussions with my colleagues in the Canadian Alliance, we have supported the bill from the very beginning.

I hope the bill gets very quick passage. I do know that other groups of people in Canada have looked at the bill, and I think some of our larger police forces in the larger cities, and other groups such as the firemen, could well look at the bill and I expect they would have a reaction which would pattern after this bill. On behalf of the official opposition, I am very pleased to support the bill. We give it our full endorsement.

● (1315)

Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's West, PC): Madam Speaker, we also stand in support of Bill C-31.

We in this country take for granted the different agencies that put their lives on the line for us and protect us. Quite often we take for granted what is our own. How often, as we go through life, do we take for granted our families, friends, wives, girlfriends, sons and daughters because they are there. They are supposed to know what is going on. They are there to support, help and whatever. We think that is the way it will always be, not realizing that they also have concerns and needs and that they need attention every now and then.

We do the same thing with our agencies. We put them in place and talk about how proud we are of our different agencies and yet we often forget to pay the attention to them that they deserve. As time slips by many of the concerns and benefits that we should be making sure they achieve we overlook. We suddenly find they are falling behind other groups in society that are up front, lobbying, pushing and whatever, while our solid people and in some cases volunteer agencies are working day and night, putting their lives on the line, asking for nothing and we overlook them.

The hon. member who just spoke talked about other agencies looking at what we are doing for the RCMP and perhaps patterning their plans on the legislation with which we are dealing right now. I agree wholeheartedly with him, that the opportunity is there for the other agencies to make sure that we as legislators look after their concerns.

However let us concentrate on the RCMP. If there is one agency in this country that perhaps does not get the attention it deserves it is the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. When we say the word "Mountie" two things come to mind. One is from a national perspective, the person on the horse with the red jacket for whom we feel so proud, a Canadian emblem.

An hon. member: The red serge.

Mr. Loyola Hearn: The red serge, that is right.

The other is the person hauling us in on the side of the road because we are 20 kilometres over the speed limit. In between, it is not just a matter of the statesperson, the emblem of the country, the very proud emblem I might add, but the person we see at all major functions dressed in the red serge, holding the flag and saluting with respect. We have tremendous respect for these people.

On the other hand, we are looking at being the victim of the overzealous policeman sometimes. When we edge a couple of kilometres over the speed limit and we are hauled in and given a ticket, which we deserve by the way, in between we fail to see that there is more to it than just being there for the pomp and ceremony and, on the other hand, enforcing the laws of the land.

We do not realize until we start working with and becoming involved with such agencies the amount of extra work that they do. It is not only the prosecution that they are concerned with. It is prevention. It is the work they do in our schools. It is the work they do with our young people. It is the encouragement they give, rather than the fear and the threats.

When we were growing up we were told that if we were not good the Mounties would be called. We had this fear of police. However that is not the case. They are not to be feared. They are there for our benefit.

If we were to talk to them many of them would tell us that they would much rather spend their time working with young people, with society generally, along the lines of prevention, rather than going out and trying to force a cure by coming down with the heavy hand. We are not making life any easier for them.

● (1320)

Let me talk about the rules, the regulations and the bills that we bring in and the laws that we make in this honoured establishment and in our provincial assemblies. One might ask what provincial assemblies have to do with the national police force. As we know all, the provinces have the RCMP which has jurisdiction over many of the laws and rules that govern this country and there are all kinds of provincial implications. Every time a new law or rule is brought in the Mounties are expected to enforce it. We give them more and more work on the one hand but we give them fewer and fewer tools on the other to do the job.

Quite often, in relation to the personal recompense for the work and responsibilities that we shower upon them and the demands we make upon them, we seldom think of asking them how we can make it up to them for the service they provide. As I said before, it is an agency that we perhaps take for granted.

As we deal with legislation like this and when we, as representatives of the people across the country, stand in this hallowed Chamber, the hallowed halls of Parliament, it is only right and fair that we recognize groups such as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the firemen, the local police establishments scattered throughout our nation, and the volunteers from other sectors, all of whom make society a bit better and a bit safer for us.

We are the ones who are in a position to thank them on behalf of the people we represent. We are the ones who can ensure that as we try to make life generally better for people throughout the country, we also try to make life better for those who assist us in making life a little better for people throughout the country.

Therefore it is with great pleasure that we support the bill. We should be very conscious as we introduce legislation in the House that we support legislation that will help all the agencies throughout the country that help all of us so much.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is my privilege, on behalf of the New Democratic Party, to throw our support behind this beneficial change. We believe members of the RCMP play a significant role in contributing to Canadian society. This pension issue could be classified by some as housekeeping or just some type of modern modification, but in reality it is about building confidence and showing that we can do some small things that go a long way.

Members of the RCMP are very important to my constituency. They are the instant recognition for what a Canadian is and Canadian symbolism, showing confidence not only in a government but also demonstrating the pride that we have out there in a very overt way. A good place to look at that is in Windsor where we have so many different cultures and groups of new people coming to get their citizenship. One of the things that we always have is a member from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police at the ceremony. The constable is usually someone that is very personable and very involved with the actual ceremony itself, making a point to sign any autograph, to shake hands, to be part of photos and to say a few words of comfort as well as a congratulatory message. That is important because it exudes confidence in a nation and a confidence that we have which needs to be backed up. This pension addition is a minor modification, in a sense, but at the same time shows that we need to be doing the right things for them.

There are so many other different issues that we think about when we think about members of the RCMP. It is not just the colours of their uniform and the very overt way that we see their presence, whether it be on a horse or in a parade and those types of things, it is the work they do out in the field on a day to day basis. Once again, improving their actual conditions and their confidence in the government will only help that.

In our community and others, they represent the first line of defence in many ways for what is happening at our borders, the people who are needed to respond to more international matters. In our city, where we have a municipal force and a provincial force as well, the Mounties have a different stature than those organizations because they represent the nation. When we have issues they are certainly there providing another level of confidence that sits well with our other supports, be it those other organizations I mentioned, or our firefighters and other first responders that are so important.

Sometimes we take these things for granted because we have these traditions and we know we can always rely on them. Sometimes we forget to do the regular things that are necessary to ensure their long term viability. That is what the bill would do. It would ensure another piece of a larger puzzle and we will have it to pass on.

That is one of the reasons that we support this change. It is something that, once again, is going to show that there is a longstanding commitment behind the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. More important, the Mounties will improve their ability to feel confident in the work setting.

We have been debating most of the morning and over the last few days the working conditions of public servants. We know from the union's response that there are some concerns about Bill C-25 and their working conditions that are going to be enacted and the difficulty that they are going to face. That is the exact opposite from what this is, and that is unfortunate.

We have two situations here. In Bill C-25 we have some regressive actions that are being taken against those workers and the conditions in which they are going to have to live, but what we have here is something which will be of benefit to the RCMP. We think the way to go is to improve the morale of Canadians who are employed through government tax dollars.

In the last 10 years, far too many times there have been cases where those people have tended to be attacked by different individuals and organizations, and that is not right.

There certainly is an opportunity here to do more of what this recommendation says and with the changes that will happen. I hope the government learns something from this and applies it to Bill C-25. I hope it learns that it can do some of these things that sometimes are described as housekeeping but that actually do improve morale, that do improve the quality of service and that give security for those men and women who are serving this country, and their families, who also have to pay some price for being sometimes on the front line of public services. This is overdue for the RCMP and something that we in the New Democratic Party support.

● (1325)

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

Some hon. members: Question.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the third time and pased)

* * *

● (1330)

[*Translation*]

LOBBYISTS REGISTRATION ACT

Hon. Andy Mitchell(for the Minister of Industry): moved

the second reading of, and the Senate to Bill C-15, an act to amend the Lobbyists Registration Act.

Mr. Serge Marcil (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to open the debate on the amended version of Bill C-15, An Act to amend the Lobbyists Registration Act. This version differs only slightly from that passed March 18.

The Senate made only one amendment to correct an inconsistency discovered in an amendment passed by the House at third reading.

The hon. member for Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Aldershot moved the original amendment during debate at third reading. I understand that he supports without reservation the change recommended by the Senate.

Obviously, the Minister of Industry considers this amendment appropriate under the circumstances.

The Senate's amendment and the original amendment moved at third reading are fully within the meaning of Bill C-15, which is to create a lobbyists registration system that works well now and that will work even better in the future. It is about creating a more transparent lobbyists registration system that is easier to enforce and that continues to earn the trust of Canadians.

The House has every reason to approve the version amended by the Senate. Rapid adoption of the bill means it will be able to receive royal assent and be implemented.

Before addressing the substance of the amendment made by the Senate, allow me to take a moment to remind the hon. members of the context for today's debate.

As my hon. colleagues from all sides of this House will recall, the review that led to Bill C-15 was a lengthy and comprehensive one.

While the original lobbying legislation dates back to 1989, parliamentarians and the public were concerned that it might not go far enough to allow a thorough public scrutiny of lobbying. In response to these concerns, our party promised improvements to the lobbying regime during the 1993 election campaign.

We delivered on our promise. Our government introduced a bill to review the Lobbyists Registration Act, which Parliament passed, and a new act came into force in 1996. This act resulting in the development of the code of conduct for lobbyists and led us to work tirelessly to ensure the efficiency of the new system.

This work has met with success. Gone are the public concerns, which were commonplace ten years ago, about agreements entered into behind closed doors. Why? Because the Lobbyists Registration Act and the system supporting it have brought a high level of transparency to the situation.

A balance has been struck between four principles: first, free and open access to the government is an important matter of public policy; second, lobbying public office holders is a legitimate activity; third, concerning transparency, public office holders and the public must be able to know who is trying to influence the government; and fourth, with respect to efficiency, a registration system for paid lobbyists must not hinder free and open access to the government.

That having been said, enforcement of legislation normally reveals what improvements are necessary. That is what happened with the Lobbyists Registration Act.

In 2001, the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology reviewed both the system and the act. It tabled its report, in which it recommended that the government make a number of changes and take a closer look at certain questions.

The government has followed up on these recommendations, consulted further and produced Bill C-15.

In addition to the usual housekeeping and technical amendments designed to correct minor drafting errors, the bill has three main components.

First, it contains a clearer definition of lobbying.

Second, it simplifies and standardizes registration requirements for all categories of lobbyists and strengthens the applicable cancellation requirements.

Third, it establishes more meaningful enforcement powers.

Neither the House or the Senate standing committees put forward amendments to the substantive elements of Bill C-15.

There were discussions and debates on specific points, but at the end of the day, parliamentarians from both Houses agreed that Bill C-15 would solve some key issues effectively.

● (1335)

Nonetheless, during debate at third reading, the hon. member for Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Aldershot put forward an amendment to increase the amount of information required from lobbyists. More specifically, it amended subsection 7(1) and added sub-paragraph 7(3)(*h*.3). Under this sub-paragraph, lobbyists who are former public office holders would have to describe their former duties as part of the registration process.

As the hon. member himself later admitted, this amendment included an unintended loophole. It required information only from corporate lobbyists and lobbyists working for not-for-profit organizations. Consultant lobbyists, who provide lobbying services under contract to companies, organizations, or other clients, were not required to provide the same information.

It is clear that this amendment is inconsistent with the pervasive theme of Bill C-15, which is the equal and transparent application of registration requirements to all lobbyists. Having seen this loophole, the hon. member wrote to the Senate Standing Committee on Rules, Procedures and the Rights of Parliament to ask that this omission be corrected. The committee made the correction as requested and the Senate accepted the amendment, which is the only change that was made to the version passed by the House in March.

Essentially, what we have before us is a significant administrative correction we have every reason to accept. It makes absolutely no change in the major thrust of the law, but merely adds one additional detail in the interests of uniformity and greater transparency.

As a result, Bill C-15 as amended will enable us to take one more step toward being able to meet Canadians' growing expectations as far as ethical issues are concerned. It will be compatible with the other steps taken by our government, such as increasing the number of auditor general reports, departmental measures broadening the internal audit procedures, and the adoption of a more comprehensive code governing the conduct of holders of public office.

This bill constitutes one more means of keeping the promise made by the Prime Minister when he revealed his eight-point ethics plan last June. It falls in line with the measures aimed at introducing a guide for ministers of state and parliamentary secretaries in connection with ethical and other issues, as well as with the new rules governing interactions between ministers and crown agencies.

The Senate has asked us to make one minor change to a bill we have already passed once. It is a reasonable change, and one we should approve. We will thus be able to implement the improvements proposed in Bill C-15 to the Lobbyists Registration Act. We will be able to make a system that is working well now work still better in future.

[*English*]

Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, I am honoured to stand and represent not only the people of my riding but, I believe, people across Canada when we address issues of such interest to the Canadian taxpayer and also to those who are looking for integrity in all the different aspects of the governing process.

Over the years I have been a member of Parliament, I have watched with interest things which have to do with the ethics counsellor, the registration of lobbyists and other related items. If the government can be accused of anything, it can be accused of making timid steps in the right direction but not really getting into the nitty-gritty of what is required.

When we are dealing with lobbyists, we are dealing with basically three kinds of people: those who come here and simply look for change in government policies, social policies, tax policies or whatever; those who come here as individuals representing organizations that are lobbying for change in legislation; and finally, individuals and businesses whose jobs are to lobby to get government contracts. I think the latter of these three groups probably present most Canadians with the largest concern.

When we look at things like buying helicopters for the armed forces or buying computers for all the different government departments, we are talking big bucks, large amounts of money. It is important that the process by which those contracts are let is very open and transparent.

I am in favour of the Lobbyists Registration Act per se. I believe it is a good thing that members, if they engage in these activities, are required to disclose that information and that it be made available. As a matter of fact, in the almost 10 years that I have been here, the accessibility to such lists has been improved vastly by the introduction of the Internet and the great amount of connectivity of Canadians in that mode of communication.

As we know, it is possible to click on an Internet site, the ethics counsellor's website for example, from anywhere in the world and find out who is registered as a lobbyist. Of course the Lobbyists Registration Act spells out who needs to be registered. It also spells out what information needs to be disclosed. Then when we click on the website and ask for that search, we can find out who is currently lobbying the government to get a contract, to sell it huge amounts of computers or whatever item is being bid on.

We spoke in previous readings of this bill, prior to sending it to committee and also in second reading, about the different problems inherent in the lobbyists registration. We must always remember a very important background, and that is disclosure has but one purpose and that purpose is to prevent behaviour which is unethical or illegal. Just the disclosure itself does not justify it. People cannot say that because they have disclosed they now have a licence to do anything they want. It still must be within the law and be within a very high level of ethics.

● (1340)

I compare this, for example, to a person who walks into a store and in plain sight of a clerk steals something off the shelf. That person cannot claim that because an employee of the store saw him or her do it, it is therefore not theft. It is theft regardless of whether it was seen. The same thing is true with registration. It provides disclosure but does not give a licence to engage in whatever behaviour is required to get the contract.

We must remember that the purpose and the principle of disclosure is to prevent behaviour which is unethical. In other words, hopefully people will know that what they do will be made public, that they will not get away with it and, therefore, they will not do it. I think that is the basis of the whole Lobbyists Registration Act and the public disclosure of the lists.

When this bill was finally completed earlier this year at third reading in the House, it was sent off to our unaccountable Senate. I know the rules of the House do not permit me in any way to speak disparagingly of the other place and I—

● (1345)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): I apologize to the hon. member for interrupting, but on a point of order the hon. member for St. John's West.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's West, PC): Madam Speaker, I apologize to my colleague for interrupting while he is in full flight but he will have lots of time. I will not take very long.

I wish to inform the Chair that there have been consultations among the parties and I believe you would find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That the membership of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs be modified as follows:

Gerald Keddy for Rick Borotsik

And that Rick Borotsik and Gary Schellenberger be added to the list of associate members;

And that Gerald Keddy be removed from the list of associate members.

(Motion agreed to)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

LOBBYISTS REGISTRATION ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion in relation to the amendment made by the Senate to Bill C-15, an act to amend the Lobbyists Registration Act.

Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, I do not mind that interruption at all because it helps the people in the party over at the other end of the House try to unscramble its egg.

I would like to proceed with my talk. The bill as passed was then sent over to the other place. I know a number of the senators over there and I have no need at all to question whether they are dedicated or hard-working. I know a number of them work probably much harder than some members of this House. Therefore that is not an issue.

However I really must take every opportunity where we get something back from the Senate, whether it is a bill that is initiated there or whether it is a bill that it has looked at and then sent back here with a revision. I always have to ask this, and continue to review with anybody who will listen. In today's modern age how can we, being a so-called democratic society, justify a whole House of legislators who control what happens in our country without them also being elected? This is an issue which I can never forget to talk about when we deal with something that comes back from the Senate.

I appreciate its work. I happen to agree with the amendment it has sent back on this occasion. It actually did some work which should have been done over here, recognized a shortcoming and sent back the bill with an amendment to fix up that shortcoming. That is great, but that is a specific issue. It was doing its job. It can also do its job and do it better if it had the legitimacy of elected office and accountability to the people that it purports to represent.

The Senate has sent back an amendment and I sincerely wish it would have come back from an elected Senate. However it came back from an hon. House over there trying to do its work and hopefully improving this legislation. I do not know whether the parliamentary secretary, when he gave his little speech, outlined this for whomever was listening, but the Senate amendment basically adds one line. It says that if the individual, who is acting as a lobbyist and who is registering, has been a former public office holder, then he must also disclose in the registration the offices that were held.

As an example, not very long ago I met a former Liberal member of Parliament. He happens to be a lobbyist now. He gets a very fine salary from a large corporation. His job is to come over here and talk to the Liberal cabinet ministers whom he knows intimately, and I mean that in the general sense of the term. He was a member of the Liberal Party and worked with it. Consequently he has the ear of the minister. When the corporation, which he represents, wants to get a government contract, he can walk into the minister's office and the minister will greet him with a "Hi" and use his first name. They are immediately on friendly terms because they have been colleagues.

I do not know about you, Madam Speaker, but I find something just a little offensive about that. Very frankly, whether the person who shows up in the minister's office knows him well or does not know him or her at all, should be irrelevant to who gets the contract. The contract should be based upon very rigid criteria that are written into the contract. Those are the terms to be met and those are the conditions. When the contract is let, companies should bid on it and it should be evaluated objectively as possible to see which contract gives taxpayers the best buy for the money. Whether it is computers or helicopters or vehicles for the government fleet or whatever, there should be a careful cost benefit analysis to see if we are getting the correct return for the money.

● (1350)

An hon. member: That is the case now.

Mr. Ken Epp: Madam Speaker, a member across the way seems to have an ant under his shirt collar.

I hasten to add that it should have nothing to do with whether or not a person can somehow try to influence the minister toward a contract for a particular company. That is a given to me.

All the bill requires at this stage is that there be registration. The amendment from the Senate would require that the member of Parliament state in his registration that he has been a member of Parliament. I have not looked at the details. I think this would be due to regulation, but I wish the Senate would have explicitly said that especially if the lobbyist had been a member of the current government. If that were the case, then there would be a tighter relationship. It would warrant more rigid scrutiny by taxpayers and others accessing the website and the lists in terms of watching what the person did.

There is another disadvantage in this whole lobbyists registration thing. I cannot understand why the members of the government do not understand this. I would think it would be really wise of them not to accept interventions by lobbyists on these things.

Let us say that five bids were submitted and that the best bid was selected, the best value for the dollar on behalf of the taxpayer. Let us say also that it happened to be the company that was represented by the previous MP. Even though it may be legitimate, it would look suspicious and thereby would reduce the honour in which the whole process was held.

It would have been a lot better had there been no representation. It would have been an objective evaluation and the choices would have been made in order to get the taxpayer the best buy for the dollar. There would have been not even the appearance of interference on a friendly, person to person basis by having the best lobbyist.

This leads us to the next issue which is whether there is a process and a place for lobbyists? I hold that there is. I used to think not. Back when I was first elected, I thought there should be no lobbyists. I thought, who needs them? Members of Parliament should listen to their constituents and they should represent in the House what their constituents desire and that should be it.

I had my eyes opened when I became a member of Parliament and realized that we debate many bills and motions in the House, even some with respect to building laws and acts of Parliament in which there are many aspects. Communication is very important. It is valuable to members of Parliament to get a representation from some industrial group, perhaps on behalf of the forestry companies. If each company were to come here individually, we would never get our work done. For them to meet together and to boil it down to their five most important issues and then to visit the members of Parliament and communicate that, would be useful.

Not long ago the firefighters came to Ottawa for their lobbyist day, as they call it. I welcomed them. I like to hear from them and find out what the issues are in terms of the tax act, the Canada pension plan and other areas where we make rules that determine their livelihood and well-being after they retire, if they are not hurt or killed in action. We are making those rules. It is valuable for me to receive a representation from them as a group.

It is also totally useful that they should register as lobbyists. People would know that the firefighters association had a lobbyist. They would know who the person was who tries to bend the ears of legislators. I do not think there is anything wrong with that and it is useful to a degree.

● (1355)

It becomes very offensive when the government succumbs to pressure on a personal basis from an in-house lobbyist who used to be a member of the very department that the person is now lobbying. That happens. From time to time we hear of this. A high level employee, a person very high up in the hierarchy in—

Mr. John Bryden: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, the member for Elk Island seems to be going on indefinitely. Is there no limit on the time he has to speak?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): No, the hon. member has unlimited time to speak.

Mr. Ken Epp: Madam Speaker, it is interesting to know that in this particular instance we are not limited to one minute, or 10, 20 or 40 minutes. I could speak for the rest of the day, if I so chose. If all goes well, I should be completed my speech before the end of the day which will give someone else an opportunity to speak.

Let me get back to the thread of my thoughts. Lobbyists have to register under the bill. The Senate has sent back an amendment which forces them to disclose one more additional piece of information and it is a very important disclosure. It is the area in which they served in a department.

I do not believe it is acceptable for a deputy minister, a previous minister or even a member of Parliament, but specifically a deputy minister of a department to retire from government and then get a job with a business firm that will be lobbying to get a contract in the very department in which he or she had served. Disclosure is one thing, but it is not acceptable and I would like the Lobbyists Registration Act to actually prohibit that activity. In other words, it is like the person in the store, it is not just whether or not we know what is happening, but to actually prohibit the activity per se.

I wish the Senate had done its job and brought in some important amendments of that nature instead of this little housekeeping one which increases the disclosure. However I think we are better off by a small degree in this area than we were 10 years ago with what has happened with lobbyists registration and the work our party is trying to accomplish. We are trying to get a truly independent ethics commissioner, not one that is appointed by the government but one that is truly independent as is the Auditor General for example. I would like to see that strengthened even more to the point where Canadians will once again be able to say "We trust our government. We know it is doing the best that it can and all is well in the House".

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

WORKPLACE TRAINING

Mr. Janko Péric (Cambridge, Lib.): Madam Speaker, three companies in my riding of Cambridge representing the industrial manufacturing, service hospitality and small business sectors were recently recognized for their excellence in workplace training and development.

Canadian General Tower, Cambridge Memorial Hospital and McDonald-Green exemplify the very best in supporting and encouraging a highly skilled workforce. All three companies strive for career related and skill oriented programs guaranteeing the development of a highly adaptive workforce necessary in today's competitive economy.

I join all members in congratulating Canadian General Tower, Cambridge Memorial Hospital and McDonald-Green for their vision, leadership and resolve in producing a skilled workforce.

* * *

● (1400)

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, the Liberals have put Canada on the map again, this time as a haven for child pornography. ECPAT, the world's largest organization to prevent child sexual exploitation, says that Canada is an international embarrassment. Why?

The Liberals have refused to consider raising the age of consent to 16 and have refused to fund operation snowball, Canada's cross-country effort to arrest child pornographers. They appoint judges who consistently throw out verdicts against child pornographers. They stall a sexual offender registry until a tragedy suddenly motivates them. They write a new bill making it legal to have sex with children, as long as there is no position of trust, and legal to have child porn if there is a public good.

With all this evidence about the unwillingness of the Liberals to protect children from sexual exploitation, Canadians would be in their right to ask what is the government's real agenda? The only thing we know for sure, it is not protecting our children.

[*Translation*]

BATTERIES ÉLECTRIQUES GAGNON

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Madam Speaker, on May 3, Batteries Électriques Gagnon, which has its head office in my riding of Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, held a gala evening to celebrate its 50th anniversary, and also to highlight the excellent work done by the many employees over the years who contributed so much to the success of this jewel of Quebec's car and truck after-sales sector. Fifty years in business would have been impossible were it not for the ever-present spirit of cooperation and understanding that exists within the company.

I would like to congratulate and pay tribute to the two company founders, André and Claude Gagnon, members of the great Gagnon family. I would also like to thank them for their involvement in my riding of Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel and wish them the best for the continued prosperity and success of their wonderful business.

* * *

[*English*]

INTERNATIONAL COFFEE ORGANIZATION

Hon. Andy Scott (Fredericton, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the coffee industry is in crisis resulting in extreme hardship for coffee producers and workers in Africa, Latin America and Asia. In the hardest hit areas, people are starving to death as a result of the crisis. The root of the problem is overproduction fostered by World Bank policies and the marketing of low quality product.

Without a strong multilateral body such as the International Coffee Organization, producers have no protection. When supply exceeds demand, prices crash.

In 1992 the former prime minister decided to discontinue Canada's membership in the ICO, thus helping to reduce the effectiveness of the organization.

Canada's voice in the ICO would make a difference. We could be part of the solution to the crisis facing millions of African farmers. I urge the Minister of Foreign Affairs to have Canada rejoin the ICO.

* * *

[*Translation*]

BUREAU DE CONSULTATION JEUNESSE DE LAVAL

Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, everyone agrees that young people are the future of this country. However, some young people experience serious problems that require help from the community and from the government.

I am therefore extremely pleased to announce that, thanks to a $400,000 grant from the Government of Canada, the Bureau de consultation jeunesse de Laval will be able to build some ten supervised apartments by July.

The purpose is simple: to prevent homelessness among at-risk youth who are between 17 and 22 years old by providing not just a roof over their heads, but also guidance from professional youth workers.

Thanks to this type of initiative, these young people will one day be able to take an active part in our society.

[*English*]

WORLD PARTNERSHIP WALK

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, on Sunday, May 25 the annual World Partnership Walk took place throughout Canada.

It is the largest event of its kind in support of international development and cooperation. Canadians in cities across the country raised over $3 million that will go toward development projects in central Asia and eastern Africa. The money will be matched by a donation from CIDA.

In the city of Edmonton over $300,000 was raised and over 3,000 people participated. I would like to congratulate the 400 volunteers who helped make the Edmonton walk a success, especially Mr. Salim Chatoor, who has been the convenor of the walk for the past five years and once again did a terrific job.

The World Partnership Walk is definitely one of the many great things done by the Aga Khan foundation development network, which was created to realize the social conscience of Islam through institutional action.

I encourage parliamentarians and Canadians everywhere to visit the website, www.worldpartnershipwalk.com, to sign up and to walk in next year's event.

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● (1405)

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Beth Phinney (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in celebration of Environment Week I want to pay tribute to the efforts of those individuals within Hamilton who have effectively sought to preserve, restore, and protect our environment.

At the 24th annual Hamilton Environmentalists of the Year Award ceremony a number of individuals will be recognized for their contributions to the city of Hamilton.

Scott McNie will be awarded the Doctor Victor Cecilioni Environmentalist of the Year Award. Lifetime achievement awards will be given to Anne Redish and Jim MacDonald. Three awards of merit will be presented for pollution prevention. The first, to Larry Kelly of Kelly Auto Body; the second, to Beth Stormont and Sandra Root; and the third, to secondary school teachers Tina DiClementé and Franca Ianni.

I wish to congratulate these individuals for their contributions to the preservation of the environment in the City of Hamilton.

* * *

[*Translation*]

FRANÇOIS GAGNON

Mr. Richard Marceau (Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to welcome to Parliament Hill, François Gagnon, the MP for Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier for a day, who will be with us for 24 hours.

François was the winner of the sixth edition of the MP for a day contest and stood out from 1,200 other secondary IV students in an examination on general knowledge of politics.

While in Ottawa, he will have an opportunity to gain some familiarity with the parliamentary work of MPs, and will get a chance to see first hand the hectic lives we lead here on Parliament Hill. Along with his father, Mr. Jacques Gagnon, he was able to meet privately with the leader of the Bloc Quebecois and also with all the members of our caucus.

Mr. Speaker, you too will have the pleasure of meeting this young man after oral question period this afternoon.

On behalf of my hon. colleagues, I want to welcome him to Parliament and wish him an excellent visit.

* * *

[*English*]

ROWING

Mr. Tony Tirabassi (Niagara Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the members of the rowing teams at Denis Morris Catholic High School, which is located in my riding of Niagara Centre.

The senior boys fours with coxie, under coach Matt Miller, placed first at the Wyandotte Regatta in Detroit, Michigan on May 2 and 3. The junior girls heavy 8, under coach Brian Dell, placed first at the same regatta. The senior boys heavy 8, under coach Brian Dell, placed first at the Mother's Day Regatta in St. Catharines on May 11.

I wish to congratulate all members of these three exemplary rowing teams. They have set the bar extremely high for others to attempt to equal their success.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. Chuck Cadman (Surrey North, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, last weekend Richmond RCMP officers held the first Annual Constable Jimmy Ng Memorial Road Hockey Tournament in memory of their fallen comrade. Constable Ng was killed last year when his patrol car was rammed by an alleged street racer. The goal of this event was to raise money for a scholarship in Constable Ng's name.

Once again I spent some time with Jimmy's parents, Chris and Theresa. Their courageous resolve to promote awareness of the potentially catastrophic consequences of mixing young inexperienced drivers with high performance cars is commendable. But beyond educating teens and parents, the Ngs also recognize the need for lawmakers to do their part.

Just last week we saw another conditional sentence imposed on a street racer convicted for his part in the death of a 17 year old. Street racing season is upon us. The bad actors know they will not face a day in jail even if their selfish disregard for others kills or injures innocent people.

By its silence and inaction, the government at worst accepts this behaviour or, at the very least, just plain does not care.

[*Translation*]

CANADA MILLENNIUM SCHOLARSHIP FOUNDATION

Ms. Diane St-Jacques (Shefford, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation has announced its Excellence Awards for 2003-04.

One hundred and twenty Cegep graduates in Quebec have been given the Excellence Award in recognition of their academic achievement, service to the community, leadership, and interest in innovation.

I would like to congratulate one young man from my riding, Marc-André Marois, from the Cégep de Granby Haute-Yamaska, who received an Excellence Award.

Receiving such an award is a high point in a student's life. It recognizes the academic achievement of our young people.

A Government of Canada initiative, these awards are a major investment in the future of our students. They are a excellent means of promoting academic excellence.

Once again, I congratulate Marc-André. He is a prime example of the fact that Canada's future lies in its youth.

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GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. André Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska, PC): Mr. Speaker, one year after the sponsorship scandals, the government has yet to get rid of the stench of bogus contracts awarded to Liberal-friendly companies.

In the meantime, organizations that legitimately deserve support from Ottawa are being denied help.

I have an example. Yesterday, the hon. member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik asked the Minister of Public Works to help the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League, which will be hosting a major event: the entry draft in Val-d'Or this weekend. He asked for $15,000.

The same government that squandered $1 billion on the firearms registry and $100 million on luxury jets said no.

This proves to voters in Témiscamingue that the Liberals simply do not understand the legitimate needs of the people in the region. Fortunately, the good news is that on June 16 they will have an opportunity to express their displeasure by voting for Rachel Lord, the Progressive Conservative Party candidate in Témiscamingue.

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● (1410)

CHURCH OF SAINT-JOACHIM IN CHÂTEAUGUAY

Mr. Robert Lanctôt (Châteauguay, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my fellow citizens on the occasion of the unveiling, last Sunday, of a commemorative plaque to recognize the architectural heritage of the Church of Saint-Joachim in Châteauguay.

Built between 1774 and 1778, this church was designated an historical monument in 1955 by the Historic Monuments Commission of Quebec for the quality of its furnishings and its construction. This building stands out from religious construction of the time because of the simplicity of its architectural features, both on the interior and exterior, which gives it its unique architectural character.

As governor of the Fonds Saint-Joachim de Châteauguay and sponsor of the fund-raising campaign, I am proud to say that the Châteauguay community has finally received the heritage recognition it deserves.

We are proud to assert today our heritage, our Quebecois vernacular tradition. Bravo.

* * *

[*English*]

COLIN GIBSON

Mr. John Bryden (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Aldershot, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today in the Senate chamber the Canadian Association of Former Parliamentarians held its annual assembly to honour those former MPs who passed away during the previous year. Among those so honoured was Colin Gibson, my Liberal predecessor.

He was a fine man. As good as they come. He had an unwavering faith in his country that he demonstrated as a soldier during the second world war and in democratic battle in this House of Commons. As I came to know him, I also appreciated that he had an unflinching belief in the basic goodness of all human beings. That, above all else, was his great strength.

It is a privilege and an honour to attempt to follow in his footsteps in this House.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in classic Liberal doublespeak, the Prime Minister lectured G-8 leaders about keeping public spending and budgetary deficits under control, while accepting Bush's argument that the U.S. deficit was a one-shot affair caused by September 11 and the Iraq war. Who is he kidding?

Bush's trillion dollar star wars has massive long term budgetary implications. It is anything but a one-time expenditure. For the Prime Minister to join the chorus warning Iran and North Korea against breaking the nuclear non-proliferation and anti-ballistic missile treaties while sitting at the table with the U.S. to negotiate Canada's role in star wars rings hollow and hypocritical.

The Prime Minister had an opportunity going into the G-8 summit to lead by example and call for an end to weapons of mass destruction. Instead he threw away Canada's diplomatic capital with the decision to participate in star wars.

Shame on the government for undermining Canada's voice for peace around the world.

S. O. 31

[*Translation*]

JEAN BOUCHARD

Mr. Jean-Guy Carignan (Québec East, Lib. Ind.): Mr. Speaker, on May 29, with supporters and sponsors present, the Les yeux du coeur convoy led by Jean Bouchard started off symbolically from Quebec City.

For the first time in sport and physical activity history, a blind and hard-of-hearing cyclist will be crossing Canada on a tandem bicycle. From June to September, Quebec City athlete Jean Bouchard will pedal from Victoria to Halifax.

Mr. Bouchard has decided to ride across the country to show that we can stay fit at any age, live with disabilities and even overcome them. Jean has been hard of hearing since birth and he lost his sight gradually in his adult years.

Now aged 66, this courageous athlete has become a model of perseverance and discipline. He is still devoting much of his spare time to physical activity. He started this trek across Canada on a tandem bicycle to raise money for the Fondation En Adaptation Motrice Inc., a non-profit organization promoting physical activity, the integration of persons with disabilities and functional independence for seniors.

We commend Mr. Bouchard's initiative and wish him all the best on his journey.

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● (1415)

[*English*]

URBAN AFFAIRS

Ms. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities recently held its annual conference in Winnipeg, attended by city leaders from all across Canada.

I want to take this opportunity to congratulate FCM and its work on behalf of Canadian cities. The Prime Minister's caucus task force on urban issues, the national round table on the environment, and many other organizations helped to move the urban agenda forward.

We all know the pressures facing municipalities today. The federal government continues its investments in our urban regions. In order to overcome the many challenges, municipalities must be invited by the provinces to be at the table for joint federal, provincial and municipal discussions on strategic priorities.

I challenge all orders of government to put politics aside in the best interests of all Canadians and invite the municipalities to be at the table, always respecting our jurisdictions and our Constitution, and to work together in an equal partnership on ways to address those major pressures.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[*English*]

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, while the Liberal leadership campaign transition continues to drag on and the Prime Minister jets around the world making verbal gaffes, the bills are starting to pile up for Canadians. We are now over two weeks into the mad cow crisis that has shut down the beef industry costing farmers millions of dollars and putting thousands of Canadian jobs at risk.

Can anyone in the government tell us when we can expect the ban on the importation of Canadian beef to be lifted?

Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a few minutes ago I had another conversation with U.S. secretary Ann Veneman. Those who have watched the technical briefing today are aware of the fact that because we did not receive some DNA matching there is a 15% chance that the lineage of the case animal was in another line.

We are therefore going to have to do testing on that line. That will take another three or four days before that science is done. We will need that science, as we have said all along, not only to prove it to the United States but to the OIE and others.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, that is the short crisis.

Canada is over two months into the SARS outbreak. It is devastating the tourism industry in Toronto. We are one exported case away from another WHO travel advisory, yet the health minister still refuses to implement mandatory interviews at airports.

When will someone in the government require mandatory interviews for SARS at Canadian airports?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said for some time, we do a daily risk assessment and on the basis of that assessment we put in place procedures.

For the hon. member to suggest that it is one case away from a travel advisory is misleading the public. In fact, the WHO had its regular Tuesday meeting today and decided not to impose an additional travel advisory on the City of Toronto. It believes that the procedures in place and the methods of public health being followed by local officials in Toronto are controlling and containing this latest outbreak.

* * *

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I guess it does not matter how many times it makes the same mistake.

[*Translation*]

Canada has been in a trade dispute over softwood lumber for two years. But the government did not announce anything to support the industry and its workers; it refuses to budge and will not act on the promises it made to the communities.

When will the government finally deliver the goods to the lumber industry and the workers?

[*English*]

Hon. Herb Dhaliwal (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the hon. member and Parliament what we have done in terms of supporting the softwood lumber industry.

Let me remind the hon. member that there have been $110 million for research and development, $29.7 million to expand offshore markets, $181 million to assist displaced workers and the community adjustment fund, $20 million for an advocacy program, and $15 million for the softwood lumber associations. That is $350 million that the government has committed.

Perhaps the hon. member should do some research before he stands up and asks questions about the softwood—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Crowfoot.

* * *

AIR INDIA

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is a well known fact that operational procedures between CSIS and the RCMP have not always been followed. It is a well known fact that the relationship and the communications between the two security agencies have at times been strained. Therefore, there is the very real possibility that CSIS did not inform the RCMP of all pertinent information regarding the Air India flight 182 bombing.

My question is for the Solicitor General. Will he initiate and inquire to assure Parliament and Canadians that all information was given to the RCMP by CSIS?

● (1420)

Hon. Wayne Easter (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in effect, that inquiry has been held. It was held in 1991-92 by the Security Intelligence Review Committee when it reviewed this matter extensively. That report stated:

> We further believe that CSIS fulfilled its mandate to investigate the possible terrorist threats and that it advised the appropriate government and law enforcement agencies of the information it had in a timely and comprehensive way.

Those are the facts.

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, allegations that CSIS erased wiretaps and destroyed files caused the RCMP to launch an investigation, not in 1991 but in 2000, an investigation as to how CSIS was involved in the Air India flight 182 bombing.

Those allegations in 2000 were proven to be true. Why then does the Solicitor General refuse to believe that these new allegations may in fact be true? Why does he refuse to initiate an inquiry to either prove or dispel the serious allegations?

Hon. Wayne Easter (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the 1991-92 investigation also talks about the tapes and the comments that the member just raised. It deals with those facts.

I am concerned about the families of the victims out there who are listening to this kind of rumour and rhetoric from the other side. I think it is a bit of a travesty that they would pull those rumours out of the air and possibly jeopardize the longest running investigation and court case in history.

* * *

[*Translation*]

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last October, the Minister of Natural Resources stated that if the softwood lumber crisis dragged on, the government should increase aid to businesses and workers. Eight months later, in a letter to all the members, the Minister for International Trade is finally acknowledging that the industry's situation has gotten worse.

Will the government now stop assessing the situation, as it repeats ad nauseam, and announce phase 2 of its aid plan for businesses and workers in the softwood lumber industry?

[*English*]

Hon. Herb Dhaliwal (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I just outlined a few minutes ago all the things that we as the federal government have done, totalling up to $350 million.

We, as a government, the Minister of Industry, the Minister of Human Resources Development, the Minister for International Trade and myself, are following this situation very closely. We want to ensure that our industry can continue to be a dynamic industry and that it can continue its operations.

We are concentrating on making sure we get an agreement but if we do not get an agreement soon, there is no doubt that we will have to do more for the industry to protect—

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

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, everything the minister has mentioned is for the intermediate or long-term. But, the situation is getting worse right now. That is exactly what the Minister for International Trade is telling us. Despite all the wonderful long-term measures, right now, nothing being is being done to help these businesses. This is what is serious.

I hear the minister saying, "If things get worse, aid will be forthcoming". He has been saying for eight months now, "If things get worse, aid will be forthcoming". But things have gotten worse and the minister has admitted this. Will he wake up and provide this aid immediately? That is what these businesses need.

Hon. Claude Drouin (Secretary of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important not to inflame the situation. Direct aid cannot be given to the industry because the U.S. would criticize us for doing so and this would not be in the industry's interests. That is what the Bloc Quebecois must understand.

However, at the same time, we have implemented measures of $110 million to support the communities with economic diversification. We have already announced some of these measures. We will continue to work toward this goal with the stakeholders and the provinces. That is what we will do.

● (1425)

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister is telling us he intends to let the industry die. Is that what he is telling us?

On the one hand, the Minister for International Trade says that all our practices relating to softwood lumber comply with the rules of international free trade yet, in his letter to us, the minister refers to a two-year transition period to allow us to modify our practices.

How can the minister plan changes to our practices in the softwood lumber industry, when these are, in his own opinion, good practices? Why change what is already compliant?

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, two and a half years ago, we adopted a strategy supported by all governments in Canada, including the present and past governments of Quebec. We are determined to pursue our disputes with the Americans before the courts. We know very well that we are going to win and are already starting to do.

That said, I have also assumed the responsibility of opening up a dialogue with the Americans in order to try to find a long-term resolution to the matter at the same time. This is what led to the interpretation bulletins—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques.

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, because of the government's inaction, the industries are showing signs of weakness in response to the difficult situation with which they are confronted.

Will the minister admit that, if the industries concerned are beginning to show signs of weakness at present, this is because the government has left them to their own devices to cope with the countervailing duties and because, while he was involved in drafting negotiating strategies, his colleagues refused to take action?

[*English*]

Hon. Herb Dhaliwal (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been working with the industry. In fact, we have been consulting with the industry. I have met with the industry many times as has my colleague, the Minister for International Trade.

We are working closely with the industry to see what support we can provide them. The $15 million, which I outlined earlier, is as a result of the industry representatives. We have been responding and we will be monitoring the situation. If more needs to be done as a government we will need to consider that.

Oral Questions

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): Mr. Speaker, the U.S. market has been closed to Canadian cattle exports now for two weeks. The industry is losing $11 million a day.

When we add up the cost to workers on the farm, in the processing plants or driving the trucks that carry the beef across the border, that total rises to a staggering amount of over $420 million.

Could the acting Prime Minister tell the House why he is against providing much needed financial assistance to the literally thousands of Canadians whose livelihoods are at stake?

Hon. David Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, obviously the situation is very dire for the industry. The government certainly sympathizes with all those affected, and the Minister of Agriculture has made those views well known.

We are assessing the situation. We are certainly mindful of the damage that is being done and we do not preclude any action.

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): Mr. Speaker, I am sure those sympathies are appreciated but it has come to light that an influential U.S. cattlemen's association has written to American politicians urging that the American government extend its ban on Canadian beef for up to seven years. This would have a devastating impact on the Canadian economy.

If the government can afford to waste billions of dollars on a useless long gun registry, contract cancellations and massive government mismanagement, why can it not heed the advice of the Canadian Cattlemen's Association and compensate Canadian farmers for their losses as a result?

Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are working very closely with the Canadian Cattlemen's Association and all those involved in the beef value chain. I met with the beef roundtable.

The hon. member needs to know that the best compensation for our industry is an open border between Canada and the United States, and that is our primary concern.

The government recognizes the situation fully and we will be there with and for our industry in every way we possibly can in order to help all of us and our economy get through this issue.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Dick Proctor (Palliser, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is another important aspect to this story, and that is that 1,000 packing plant workers have been laid off.

Recently the government agreed that workers quarantined as a result of SARS were immediately eligible for EI benefits. However packing plant workers have been laid off as a result of another quarantine, this one affecting beef cattle. Provincial governments and even employers are calling for the waiting period to be waived immediately.

Since the government does not put one red cent into the EI fund but simply creams off the annual surplus, when will it waive the waiting period for employees in the beef industry?

● (1430)

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the Ministers of Agriculture and Transport have said, the government understands the seriousness of the circumstances.

We certainly want to ensure that the border is opened as quickly as possible. However, in the interim, I want the hon. member to know that the employment insurance is there and that officials are working proactively to assist those who are laid off to ensure that they get their income supports as quickly as possible, but also to discuss the opportunities that are there through work sharing.

The hon. member makes reference to the waiving of the two week waiting period. Indeed he is correct, it was done for health measures. It was done for those who are in quarantine to stop the spread of a communicable disease. This waiving—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Vancouver East.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if EI is covering so much why are so many people hurting?

The Liberals are bungling softwood lumber just like they bungled SARS and mad cow. Whether it is the Atlantic Canada exemption or forest jobs from B.C. to Quebec, thousands of jobs are on the line.

Before the Liberals bungle this again, will the minister commit to sitting down with affected communities, workers and companies from across Canada so he can get input from the people who know what they are doing?

Hon. Herb Dhaliwal (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are not sure what the question was there. There were about six questions and they were not directed toward any minister.

If the questions were directed toward softwood lumber, I can assure the hon. member that we are watching the situation closely. We have already announced $350 million.

If the hon. member is talking about employment figures, the government has created more jobs than any other government in decades. She should keep that in mind when she asks the question.

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AGRICULTURE

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, we have word today that another herd has been quarantined to further guarantee that mad cow disease has been held in check. Unfortunately, quarantining a herd at this late date cannot help but set back attempts to reopen the Canada-U.S. border.

Why is it taking so long to identify and quarantine herds that have been in contact with the one and only animal to test positive for mad cow?

Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I believe it was explained in the technical briefing by officials at 1 o'clock today. The information just came to us that there had been co-mingling between one herd that had already been quarantined. That information just came forward. In order to complete the science and consider the necessary testing, that had to happen.

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the question was: Why did it take so long?

All these delays are enormously costly. Meat packers, cattle feeder operations, everybody is suffering deep losses right now. The minister has said that he has approached cabinet for a compensation package. Producers and feeders have to know whether compensation is coming and, if it is, in what form.

When will the minister release the details of his mad cow compensation package? When will we hear it?

Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as has already been stated by the Minister of Transport, cabinet and the government are discussing it. We are also discussing it with the industry and with provincial governments.

I will repeat that the best compensation is an open border. We are concentrating on that, but we are not ignoring the other aspects of the seriousness of this to the industry.

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[*Translation*]

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Ms. Jocelyne Girard-Bujold (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, while softwood lumber companies are announcing layoffs and a slowdown of their activities, the secretary of state for regional development is selling his program for economic diversification. Workers in the softwood lumber sector do not want to change sectors, as the minister is proposing. They want to get their jobs back, that is all.

Four hundred and fifty forestry workers from the Coopérative forestière de Laterrière in my riding lost their jobs and want to get them back.

Does the minister not understand that what the cooperative needs, more than anything else, is a loan guarantee to allow it to resume its activities and rehire its workers?

Hon. Claude Drouin (Secretary of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there was a statement, a bit earlier, that we wanted to let the industry die. That is just about the most ridiculous thing that I have ever heard here in the House. The role of the government is to defend people and to support them, and that is what we are doing, but we do not wish to harm the industry. We want people to stay in their chosen field.

However, the Americans are maintaining the status quo on this and feel that we are subsidizing the industry, which is not the case. Meanwhile, we are trying to come up with measures to diversify the economy in the regions. That is what we are doing.

● (1435)

Ms. Jocelyne Girard-Bujold (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the secretary of state's measures to promote economic diversification do nothing to help the 450 workers at Laterrière right now. Retraining them for another sector is fine and dandy, but what they need if they want to get their old jobs back is a loan guarantee for the cooperative.

Why is this government, which is so out of touch with reality, stubbornly refusing a solution that costs so little, yet is so right and obvious?

[*English*]

Hon. Herb Dhaliwal (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this was one of the options that was looked at in phase one, which we announced at the time. It is on the table. We never removed it from the table. However we have to make sure we look at all the factors that are out there.

It is something the government has reviewed but no final decision has been made on it. It is still on the table. As part of phase two, if we do not get an agreement there is no doubt we will have to look at options, such as the hon. member has put forward.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Leon Benoit (Lakeland, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, once again the government is sending Canadian Forces into danger without proper equipment.

The Canadian Forces is scrambling to buy basic equipment like proper assault rifles, like laser sights, like night vision goggles. The military has sped up the orders for the equipment by six months but it still will not receive them in time for its mission in Afghanistan.

Why does the government not learn from its past mistakes and ensure our troops are fully equipped before it sends them into danger?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is nice to see the hon. member back in the House after a bit of an absence and to be subjected once again to his unique style of questioning.

On the issue, I have made it abundantly clear to the military some months ago that given the danger and security of this mission, no effort was to be spared and no money was to be spared to ensure that our troops were equipped with equipment to maximize their safety, including the use of unmanned aerial vehicles on time in the field. It is on target to do so.

Mr. Leon Benoit (Lakeland, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, what the minister is saying in fact is quite different from what the outgoing head of the army says. He says that our military personnel are overstretched and that they cannot continue at the current level of commitment. The new head of the army says that our forces are desperately short of soldiers.

Yet the minister says he will not increase the number of military personnel, even as his government asks for troops in the Congo and in the Israeli-Palestinian region.

Why will the government not listen to the most senior military officers and take on more troops and fewer missions?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has conveniently changed the subject. Overstretched is not the same as under equipped.

Yes, as I have said many times in the House, the military is overstretched and we are addressing that issue. However the topic of his first question was whether it was appropriately equipped.

Given that Afghanistan is a dangerous and volatile place, it is our top priority to ensure that our troops have all the equipment on time that is needed to maximize their safety in the field. We are absolutely on course to that end.

* * *

[*Translation*]

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Finance confirmed that he had maintained the tax of 1.5¢ per litre of gasoline to fight the deficit, but that he had implemented other income tax cuts.

Can the minister see that his budget decisions are very unfair from a fiscal point of view, since taxi drivers and truckers are paying more than their fair share of the anti-deficit tax he has chosen to maintain, even though their incomes are too low for them to benefit from income tax cuts?

[*English*]

Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is actually nothing unfair about a tax that goes into general revenues which helps us with health care and with infrastructure. It also helps us to create the type of environment that has resulted in the creation of over 660,000 jobs from January 1, 2002. It is a leading G7 performance.

I am sure that is good news for the country of Canada. It might not be good news for him.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, that does not make this tax any more just.

How can the minister explain his decision to maintain the anti-deficit tax of 1.5¢ per litre of gasoline, even though this penalizes the regions and the consumers very heavily, because it adds to the cost of transportation and thereby increases the price of all goods in a region?

● (1440)

[*English*]

Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what is unfair is the hon. member's question, trying to say that somehow the tax itself is unfair.

Really there is nothing wrong. Actually the type of economic plan we have created for Canadians has been one that has created a stellar performance across the world. People are talking about how Canada has been able to reduce taxes, liberate its market, create the type of innovative economy that speaks to being number one.

We will try to do better than number one.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, we have just passed the 40th anniversary of the first delivery of the Sea King helicopters. That same year President Kennedy was shot, the Beatles released their first album, our present Prime Minister was elected to Parliament for his first time and I turned 11.

We have all aged since then, some less gracefully than others, that is for sure. After 10 years of promised replacements that never show, our troops are still flying those same Sea King helicopters from 1963.

How much longer does this Prime Minister intend to keep the procurement of new choppers up in the air?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague the Minister of Public Works and I have stated many times that it is a top priority for us to get the new helicopter as quickly as possible.

We have already moved to rebundle the contract which everybody agrees will result in a faster delivery. We are now working very closely with the military to ensure that once it gets the helicopters there is a minimum delay before they are usable.

We are also in discussion with industry, all to the same end, to get that new helicopter as fast as possible.

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Canadian Alliance): That is glacial speed, Mr. Speaker. He talked about overstretched and under equipped. I do have to agree with him there, that is for sure.

It is the 40th anniversary of the Sea Kings but our troops certainly are not breaking out any party hats. The Prime Minister cancelled the replacement contract 10 years ago, and he has waffled on new procurements since a long time. When it comes to making his decision, he is either unwilling or incapable.

Why will the government and the Prime Minister not just admit that he is leaving this whole mess to the next prime minister?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think I have already answered the question about speed of delivery, that we are working on all cylinders to get that new helicopter as fast as we possibly can. I think that was my answer to the hon. member's first question. It is also my answer to her second question.

* * *

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last December the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans announced a new approach to the environmental regulation of placer gold mining in the Yukon.

The announcement will seriously affect a very important industry in my riding. While all Yukoners want to continue protecting the environment, many have voiced their fears that DFO is destroying this historically important industry.

Since the decision, the minister has shown leadership by collaborating with Yukoners to discuss making changes to the proposed new regime to allow placer mining and the Yukon economy to have a healthy future.

Could the minister update the House about the progress being made to help placer mining in the Yukon?

Hon. Robert Thibault (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member for Yukon, as well as Senator Christensen, for their great work on behalf of all Yukoners.

Since my announcement last December, important discussions have been taking place with the people most affected. Last week my department along with the Yukon government, the Council of Yukon First Nations and the Klondike Placer Miners' Association agreed to work together to develop a new regime that protects fish and fish habitat while allowing for a viable placer mining industry.

With this goal in mind, representatives of these groups have agreed to an implementation steering committee to develop—

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

* * *

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, PC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans told the *Halifax Herald* that quotas for softwood lumber were all right under certain circumstances.

It is strange because on May 29 the very same minister received a letter from the Maritime Lumber Bureau that said that it was excluded from quota and that it must again be excluded from any attempt to allocate quota.

The Premier of Nova Scotia has said, no quotas. The industry says, no quotas.

Did the Minister for International Trade agree with the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans when he went against the entire province of Nova Scotia and said that it was okay to drag Atlantic Canada into the quota regime?

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have worked very hard as a united country in the last two and a half years, and I want to thank all of those from all the provinces and all the regions in the country who have stood together to ensure that we can resolve this on a long term basis.

It continues to be our intention to resolve the problems, including the one that we are having in Atlantic Canada. There have been anti-dumping duties charged against Atlantic Canada which we have found to be punitive and which the Maritime Bureau has also asked us to work on its behalf and help remove these anti-dumping tariffs.

● (1445)

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, PC): Mr. Speaker, if we are such a united country and have such a united front, why do the Premiers of Newfoundland, New Brunswick, P.E.I. and Nova Scotia write to the minister and say, no quotas? Why has the Alberta softwood trade council said, no quotas? Why does the British Columbia forestry minister now say, no quotas, that they reject this proposal?

If six provinces are demanding that this proposal be withdrawn, why is the government trying to ram this deal down everybody throats, and why the attack on Atlantic Canada?

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this proposal has been conveyed to the United States after consultations. This is not a proposal we are absolutely trying to ram down the throat of anyone.

It is our duty to continue to maintain a healthy dialogue with the Americans. Those people over there would be the first ones to reproach us for not trying harder to bring the Americans back to the negotiating table. This is what we are trying to do.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL AID

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, fresh from the G-8 the Prime Minister in yet another vacuous utterance said that he favoured health initiatives for combating HIV-AIDS and improving affordable drug access for developing countries.

However there was no commitment to increase Canada's contribution to the global fund for AIDS, TB and malaria. There was no guarantee of pharmaceuticals for poor countries. Talk is cheap.

When will Canada triple its global fund commitment? When will we lead the fight to help desperate countries get the drugs they need for people at risk, and dying by the millions?

Hon. Susan Whelan (Minister for International Cooperation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada contributed significantly to the creation of the global fund to fight HIV-AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria.

We have pledged a total of $150 million from the year 2001 to 2004. We are ranked seventh in the donors of those that are contributing to the global fund. Last year we announced $50 million for HIV-AIDS vaccine through the Canada-Africa fund. We are quadrupling our HIV-AIDS commitment over the next three years within Canada. We are doing our part.

Oral Questions

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—St. Clair, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when smog season hits or when sustainable transportation is not in play, the Liberal government acts like it has not been in power for a decade, but it has been. Canada had record smog last summer, and our public transit and rail infrastructure is in shambles.

Will the environment minister get serious about meeting Kyoto targets and mark Environment Awareness Week, which we are celebrating this week, by announcing that 5% of the gas tax will be dedicated to communities to build public transit and freight rail services?

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am sure the hon. member is well aware of the clean fuels and engines program of the Government of Canada which extends over 10 years. The fact is we are reducing the amount of emissions that create smog from the average vehicle in Canada by 90% and the average SUV of last year by 95%, and it will happen over the next four years.

He knows that. He knows the same measures are being taken with respect to diesel fuel and on-road diesel. He knows we have measures in place for small engines, such as lawn mowers, weed trimmers, snowmobiles, et cetera. I suggest he just looks at the record once again.

* * *

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Mr. John Duncan (Vancouver Island North, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, a week and a half ago the Canadian softwood negotiator tabled a quota-based offer to the Americans, which took almost every Canadian stakeholder by complete surprise. Provincial softwood associations and industry stakeholders continue to be ticked off at being excluded from consultations prior to development of this offer.

Why did the minister allow for this betrayal of the softwood stakeholders?

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been working very closely with the stakeholders for two and a half years. We have met them time and again. We are absolutely working on their behalf. When they asked us to challenge the American action before the courts, it was on their behalf that we did it. When we are trying to bring the Americans back to the negotiating table, it is also on their behalf that we are working.

● (1450)

Mr. John Duncan (Vancouver Island North, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, rather than meeting with the national stakeholders group, the negotiator excluded other points of view and instead met only with five CEOs in favour of a quota-based offer. This is furtive behaviour. This has weakened Canada's negotiating position due to internal divisions. No future offer should be tabled with the Americans unless the stakeholders group is consulted.

Will the minister commit to doing that, right now?

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have always consulted with the stakeholders of the industry from east to west, including Quebec, the Maritimes and Atlantic Canada, Alberta and British Columbia. It is very important that we include Manitoba as well. One per cent of our exports to the United States come from Manitoba.

We will continue to work with the stakeholders. We will continue to consult them very closely, and clearly they will be part of the resolution that we are seeking with the Americans.

* * *

[*Translation*]

SHIPPING

Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport told the House that the disappearance of pilotage on the St. Lawrence would result in no danger, thus contradicting what his own minister recently told the *Hill Times*, namely, that there would be risks between Quebec City and Montreal.

Can the minister tell us, once and for all, so as to calm down the members supporting the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard, whether he intends to maintain the requirement for specialized pilots to ensure protection of the environment along the entire St. Lawrence, all the way from Les Escoumins, as is currently the case?

[*English*]

Hon. David Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a very controversial issue because for a number of years pilots have been required on the St. Lawrence Seaway system. With new technologies, arguments have been made that we do not need pilots or do not need as many pilots.

Certainly in the area from Quebec City to the Gulf of St. Lawrence new technologies are obviating the need for pilots. However between Montreal and Quebec City the level of traffic is such that they probably should remain.

This is a matter of debate that I know the transport committee is interested in and I would look forward to any recommendations that come forward from that august—

The Speaker: The hon. minister for Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister appears to be ready to find a compromise between those who would protect the St. Lawrence River and those who support the next leader of the Liberal Party, who is himself a shipowner.

As he defends this position, does the minister not understand that the environmental safety of the St. Lawrence may fall victim to a deal with those who support the next leader of the Liberal Party of Canada?

[*English*]

Hon. David Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not want to repeat my earlier answer, but I would invite the hon. member to discuss this with his colleagues at committee. I know the member for Hamilton West is quite anxious to have this kind of debate at the transport committee, and I would certainly look at their recommendations.

* * *

FIREARMS REGISTRY

Mr. Darrel Stinson (Okanagan—Shuswap, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, at a news conference this morning, Nova Scotia's justice minister, Jamie Muir, called Ottawa's gun registry a "bad law", a boondoggle, and unnecessary red tape, and he is directing provincial prosecutors to refer any charges relating to long guns to their federal counterparts. Why will the Liberal government not just admit that its so-called gun registry simply does not work and scrap it?

Hon. Wayne Easter (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do find it strange that a person in that high authority would be advising people in his own province to basically break the law.

The member knows, and I would encourage the minister in that province to get up to speed, that we are improving the system. I have said a number of times in the House that it is not our intent within the legislation to criminalize legitimate gun owners. It is our intent to use the registry system to assist NWEST in its ability to track down illegal weapons and make this country safer.

Mr. Darrel Stinson (Okanagan—Shuswap, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, eight provinces and three territories now say they will not support this fiasco. How does the government plan on implementing the law if these territories and provinces refuse to implement it?

● (1455)

Hon. Wayne Easter (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I fully believe that when people understand how this system works and when it continues to work more efficiently than it has in the past, those sensible Canadians out there, and that includes legitimate gun owners, when they see the benefits of the system, will want to register on time so that we can use the system the way it was intended to be used, which is to make our streets and communities safer.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Sarmite Bulte (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week the Secretary of State for Latin America, Africa and la Francophonie represented Canada at the presidential inauguration in Nigeria. Could the Secretary of State please tell the House what he and President Obasanjo discussed during that meeting?

Hon. Denis Paradis (Secretary of State (Latin America and Africa) (Francophonie), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we discussed Nepad, the New Partnership for Africa's Development, based on democracy, human rights and good governance. We congratulated Nigerians as the country moves from one civilian government to another for the first time.

We also raised Canada's concern regarding human rights in Nigeria, especially the application of the Sharia law.

Finally, I must add that President Obasanjo, an important leader of Nepad, shares Canada's view that peace and good governance, including anti-corruption measures, are essential to fostering prosperity on the continent.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. Ted White (North Vancouver, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, last Thursday in North Vancouver, Judge Rodgers handed down a sentence of six months at home to a 21 year old man for dangerous driving causing the death of a 17 year old student in my riding.

Judge Rodgers said he could not give jail time for this crime because of this government's conditional sentencing law.

Who over there still wants to defend this disaster they call the conditional sentencing law? Does anyone on the government's side really believe that six months at home is an appropriate sentence for dangerous driving causing death?

Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first he will understand that as Minister of Justice I cannot comment on any decision that has been rendered by a court. As well, I do not feel that it is responsible to comment on a decision.

Having said that, some years we put in place conditional sentencing to be used by the courts. It is used when an offender does not represent a danger to the public. It has been proven to be efficient as well. Having said that, we are going through a review period at this point in time. I know that the justice committee is working on that and we will see what the result is of that review process.

Mr. Ted White (North Vancouver, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the parents of the student killed as a result of Mr. Arimi's dangerous driving emigrated from Iran in 1997. They said they could not believe that their new country's legal system would permit people to go free under such circumstances. They asked, and I quote, "How can this decision be fair when my son is dead and that man goes free?"

I will ask the Minister of Justice one more time. Does he actually believe that being grounded for six months is an appropriate sentence for driving dangerously and killing a 17 year old? Is he happy with the consequences of his conditional sentencing law?

Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is very simple. No judge actually is forced to use conditional sentencing. It is one of the tools that they have access to in order to deal with offenders. As I said, they use conditional sentencing essentially when the offender does not represent a risk or danger to the public.

Having said that, there is a review process in place and we will see what will be the outcome of that review process.

[*Translation*]

AIR CANADA

Mr. Sébastien Gagnon (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Air Canada's accumulated debt is up to $12 billion. The company is getting ready to demand major concessions from its creditors, including several regional airports in Quebec.

The concessions Air Canada is demanding could cause serious financial problems for the regional airports in Rouyn-Noranda, Gaspé, Val-d'Or and Bagotville, to name just a few.

Having transferred regional airports that were previously under its jurisdiction to the municipalities, does the federal government intend to grant the Government of Quebec an equivalent subsidy to help the regional airports cope with the financial crisis that Air Canada might put them in?

[*English*]

Hon. David Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we cannot prejudge the outcome of the restructuring efforts involving Air Canada, but there is no doubt that airports across the country have been suffering. That is why we are reviewing the leases that Transport Canada has with the major airports and we are reviewing our small airport policy. Hopefully in our deliberations we will be able to deal with some of the issues raised by the hon. member.

* * *

[*Translation*]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Yolande Thibeault (Saint-Lambert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

On February 23, 2002, Ingrid Bétancourt and Clara Rojas were kidnapped by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia. As is the case with several other hostages, they are still being detained and the President of Colombia refuses to enter into negotiations with the revolutionary forces.

Does the minister intend to play an active role and call on the Colombian government to start negotiating as soon as possible with FARC for the release of the hostages?

● (1500)

Ms. Aileen Carroll (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada continues to insist that FARC free all kidnapped persons, including Ms. Bétancourt. We support every effort to resolve the situation.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs has already met with Ms. Bétancourt's sister and daughter. He has also raised the issue several times with his Colombian counterpart, notably on February 18.

Canada continues to offer its cooperation with a view to finding a peaceful solution that will guarantee the safety and freedom of the hostages.

[*English*]

CANADA LANDS COMPANY

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the University College of the Fraser Valley, along with local and provincial governments, has come up with an exciting proposal to convert vacant CFB Chilliwack lands into an educational park. That has the potential for thousands of jobs and thousands of student positions. The provincial government is onside, the local governments are onside and certainly the universities are onside as well. I would like to ask the minister in charge of the Canada Lands Company whether he would give his assurance that he would support the proposed educational facility in the Fraser Valley.

Hon. Steve Mahoney (Secretary of State (Selected Crown Corporations), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the member that people on this side of the House are equally concerned and interested in this project. In fact, last week I met with the Minister of Natural Resources, the Minister of National Defence, the mayor of Chilliwack, the local MLA and the president of the university and we reviewed the project. We are all very supportive of that proposal. Officials at Canada Lands will be continuing to meet with the officials at the city to try to make it happen.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

PARLIAMENTARY EMPLOYMENT AND STAFF RELATIONS ACT (MEMBERS' STAFF)

The House resumed from May 28 consideration of the motion that Bill C-419, An Act to amend the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act (members' staff), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: Order. It being 3:02 p.m., pursuant to order made on Wednesday, May 28, 2003, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-419 under private members' business.

Call in the members.

● (1510)

[*Translation*]

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

(Division No. 176)

YEAS

Members

Bachand (Saint-Jean)	Bélanger
Bigras	Bourgeois
Caccia	Charbonneau
Comartin	Crête
Cullen	Dalphond-Guiral
Davies	Duceppe
Gagnon (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay)	Gaudet
Gauthier	Girard-Bujold
Godin	Guay
Guimond	Laframboise
Laliberte	Lalonde
Lill	Loubier
Marceau	Martin (Winnipeg Centre)

Masse
Ménard
Paquette
Proctor
Roy
St-Hilaire
Stoffer– — 39

McDonough
Nystrom
Picard (Drummond)
Rocheleau
Sauvageau
St-Julien

NAYS

Members

Abbott
Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)
Assad
Augustine
Bagnell
Barnes (Gander—Grand Falls)
Beaumier
Benoit
Bevilacqua
Blondin-Andrew
Bonwick
Boudria
Brison
Bryden
Burton
Cadman
Caplan
Carroll
Castonguay
Cauchon
Clark
Collenette
Cuzner
Dhaliwal
Doyle
Duncan
Eggleton
Epp
Farrah
Folco
Forseth
Gallant
Godfrey
Goodale
Grewal
Hanger
Harris
Hearn
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
Hilstrom
Hubbard
Jackson
Johnston
Karetak-Lindell
Keddy (South Shore)
Keyes
Knutson
Lastewka
LeBlanc
Leung
Longfield
MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough)
Mahoney
Maloney
Marleau
McCallum
McKay (Scarborough East)
McTeague
Merrifield
Minna
Moore
Myers
Neville
O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)
Owen
Pagtakhan
Paradis
Patry
Péric
Peterson
Phinney
Price

Anders
Anderson (Victoria)
Assadourian
Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska)
Bakopanos
Barnes (London West)
Bellemare
Bertrand
Binet
Bonin
Borotsik
Bradshaw
Brown
Bulte
Byrne
Cannis
Carignan
Casey
Catterall
Chatters
Coderre
Cummins
DeVillers
Dion
Drouin
Easter
Elley
Eyking
Finlay
Fontana
Fry
Gallaway
Goldring
Gouk
Grey
Harb
Harvey
Herron
Hill (Macleod)
Hinton
Ianno
Jaffer
Jordan
Karygiannis
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Kraft Sloan
Lebel
Lee
Lincoln
Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni)
Macklin
Malhi
Marcil
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
McGuire
McLellan
Meredith
Mills (Red Deer)
Mitchell
Murphy
Nault
Normand
O'Reilly
Pacetti
Pallister
Parrish
Penson
Peschisolido
Pettigrew
Pratt
Proulx

Rajotte
Reed (Halton)
Reid (Lanark—Carleton)
Robillard
Saada
Schellenberger
Schmidt
Sgro
Simard
Solberg
Spencer
St. Denis
Stewart
Strahl
Telegdi
Thibeault (Saint-Lambert)
Toews
Torsney
Vanclief
Wappel
Whelan
Wilfert
Wood

Redman
Regan
Reynolds
Rock
Savoy
Scherrer
Serré
Shepherd
Skelton
Sorenson
St-Jacques
Steckle
Stinson
Szabo
Thibault (West Nova)
Tirabassi
Tonks
Ur
Vellacott
Wayne
White (North Vancouver)
Williams
Yelich– — 190

PAIRED

Members

Asselin
Calder
Desrochers
Fournier
Gagnon (Champlain)
Grose
McCormick
Provenzano

Bergeron
Copps
Duplain
Gagnon (Québec)
Graham
Manley
Plamondon
Tremblay– — 16

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY—NORAD

The House resumed from May 29 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Thursday, May 29, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the opposition motion standing in the name of the hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

● (1525)

[*Translation*]

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

(Division No. 177)

YEAS

Members

Abbott
Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)
Assadourian
Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska)
Barnes (London West)
Benoit
Bevilacqua
Blondin-Andrew
Borotsik
Bradshaw
Bryden

Anders
Anderson (Victoria)
Augustine
Bagnell
Barnes (Gander—Grand Falls)
Bertrand
Binet
Bonwick
Boudria
Brison
Burton

Byrne
Cannis
Carignan
Casey
Catterall
Chatters
Coderre
Cullen
Cuzner
Dion
Drouin
Easter
Elley
Eyking
Finlay
Forseth
Fry
Gallaway
Goodale
Grewal
Hanger
Harper
Harvey
Herron
Hill (Macleod)
Hinton
Johnston
Keddy (South Shore)
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Lastewka
LeBlanc
Leung
Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni)
Macklin
Malhi
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
McLellan
Meredith
Mills (Red Deer)
Moore
Nault
Owen
Pagtakhan
Paradis
Peschisolido
Pettigrew
Pratt
Rajotte
Regan
Reynolds
Rock
Savoy
Scherrer
Serré
Skelton
Sorenson
St-Jacques
Steckle
Stinson
Szabo
Tirabassi
Tonks
Vanclief
Wappel
Whelan
Wilfert
Wood
Cadman
Caplan
Carroll
Castonguay
Cauchon
Clark
Collenette
Cummins
DeVillers
Doyle
Duncan
Eggleton
Epp
Farrah
Fontana
Frulla
Gallant
Goldring
Gouk
Grey
Harb
Harris
Hearn
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
Hilstrom
Jaffer
Karetak-Lindell
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Knutson
Lebel
Lee
Longfield
MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough)
Mahoney
Maloney
McCallum
McTeague
Merrifield
Mitchell
Murphy
O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)
Pacetti
Pallister
Penson
Peterson
Pillitteri
Price
Reed (Halton)
Reid (Lanark—Carleton)
Robillard
Saada
Schellenberger
Schmidt
Simard
Solberg
Spencer
St. Denis
Stewart
Strahl
Thibault (West Nova)
Toews
Ur
Vellacott
Wayne
White (North Vancouver)
Williams
Yelich– — 156

NAYS

Members

Alcock
Bachand (Saint-Jean)
Beaumier
Bellemare
Bonin
Brown
Caccia
Charbonneau
Crête
Davies
Folco
Gaudet
Assad
Bakopanos
Bélanger
Bigras
Bourgeois
Bulte
Cardin
Comartin
Dalphond-Guiral
Duceppe
Gagnon (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay)
Gauthier
Girard-Bujold
Godin
Guimond
Hubbard
Jackson
Karygiannis
Kraft Sloan
Laliberte
Lanctôt
Lincoln
Marceau
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
McDonough
Ménard
Myers
Normand
Paquette
Patry
Perron
Picard (Drummond)
Redman
Roy
Shepherd
St-Julien
Thibeault (Saint-Lambert)– — 73
Godfrey
Guay
Harvard
Ianno
Jordan
Keyes
Laframboise
Lalonde
Lill
Loubier
Marleau
Masse
McKay (Scarborough East)
Minna
Neville
Nystrom
Parrish
Péric
Phinney
Proctor
Rocheleau
Sauvageau
St-Hilaire
Telegdi

PAIRED

Members

Asselin
Calder
Desrochers
Fournier
Gagnon (Champlain)
Grose
McCormick
Provenzano
Bergeron
Copps
Duplain
Gagnon (Québec)
Graham
Manley
Plamondon
Tremblay– — 16

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

The House resumed from June 2 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Monday, June 2, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on Motion No. 385 under private members' business.

● (1535)

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

(Division No. 178)

YEAS

Members

Alcock
Anderson (Victoria)
Assadourian
Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska)
Bakopanos
Barnes (London West)
Bélanger
Bennett
Bevilacqua
Blondin-Andrew
Bonwick
Brison
Bryden
Burton
Caccia
Cannis
Allard
Assad
Augustine
Bagnell
Barnes (Gander—Grand Falls)
Beaumier
Bellemare
Bertrand
Binet
Bonin
Bradshaw
Brown
Bulte
Byrne
Cadman
Caplan

Carignan
Casey
Catterall
Charbonneau
Clark
Collenette
Cotler
Cuzner
DeVillers
Doyle
Duncan
Eggleton
Eyking
Finlay
Fontana
Frulla
Gallaway
Godin
Goodale
Grewal
Harb
Harris
Harvey
Herron
Hubbard
Jackson
Jennings
Karetak-Lindell
Keddy (South Shore)
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Kraft Sloan
Lastewka
LeBlanc
Leung
Lincoln
Mahoney
Maloney
Marleau
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
McCallum
McGuire
McLellan
Meredith
Mills (Red Deer)
Mitchell
Myers
Neville
Nystrom
Owen
Pagtakhan
Paradis
Patry
Peschisolido
Pettigrew
Pillitteri
Price
Proulx
Redman
Regan
Reynolds
Rock
Savoy
Scherrer
Serré
Shepherd
Skelton
St-Jacques
St. Denis
Stewart
Szabo
Thibault (West Nova)
Tirabassi
Tonks
Vanclief
Wayne
Wilfert
Yelich– — 185

Carroll
Castonguay
Cauchon
Chatters
Coderre
Comartin
Cullen
Davies
Dion
Drouin
Easter
Elley
Farrah
Folco
Forseth
Fry
Godfrey
Goldring
Gouk
Hanger
Harper
Harvard
Hearn
Hill (Macleod)
Ianno
Jaffer
Jordan
Karygiannis
Keyes
Knutson
Laliberte
Lebel
Lee
Lill
Macklin
Malhi
Marcil
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Masse
McDonough
McKay (Scarborough East)
McTeague
Merrifield
Minna
Murphy
Nault
Normand
O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)
Pacetti
Pallister
Parrish
Péric
Peterson
Phinney
Pratt
Proctor
Rajotte
Reed (Halton)
Reid (Lanark—Carleton)
Robillard
Saada
Schellenberger
Schmidt
Sgro
Simard
Spencer
St-Julien
Steckle
Stinson
Telegdi
Thibeault (Saint-Lambert)
Toews
Ur
Wappel
Whelan
Wood

NAYS

Members

Abbott
Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)

Anders
Bachand (Saint-Jean)
Benoit
Bourgeois
Crête
Dalphond-Guiral
Epp
Gallant
Gauthier
Grey
Guimond
Hilstrom
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Lalonde
Loubier
Marceau
Moore
Penson
Picard (Drummond)
Roy
Solberg
St-Hilaire
White (North Vancouver)

Bigras
Cardin
Cummins
Duceppe
Gagnon (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay)
Gaudet
Girard-Bujold
Guay
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
Johnston
Laframboise
Lanctôt
Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni)
Ménard
Paquette
Perron
Rocheleau
Sauvageau
Sorenson
Strahl
Williams– — 46

PAIRED

Members

Asselin
Calder
Desrochers
Fournier
Gagnon (Champlain)
Grose
McCormick
Provenzano

Bergeron
Copps
Duplain
Gagnon (Québec)
Graham
Manley
Plamondon
Tremblay– — 16

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

PUBLIC SERVICE MODERNIZATION ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-25, an act to modernize employment and labour relations in the public service and to amend the Financial Administration Act and the Canadian Centre for Management Development Act and to make consequential amendments to other acts, be read the third time and passed, and of the motion that the question be now put.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the previous question at the third reading stage of Bill C-25.

Ms. Marlene Catterall: Mr. Speaker, I think you would find consent in the House that those who voted on the Canadian Alliance opposition day motion be recorded as voting on the motion now before the House, with Liberal members voting yes.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to proceed in this way?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

● (1545)

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

Government Orders

(Division No. 179)

YEAS

Members

Alcock
Anderson (Victoria)
Assadourian
Bagnell
Barnes (London West)
Bélanger
Bennett
Bevilacqua
Blondin-Andrew
Bonwick
Bradshaw
Bryden
Byrne
Cannis
Carignan
Castonguay
Cauchon
Coderre
Cotler
Cuzner
Dion
Easter
Eyking
Finlay
Fontana
Fry
Godfrey
Harb
Harvey
Ianno
Jennings
Karetak-Lindell
Keyes
Knutson
Laliberte
LeBlanc
Leung
Longfield
Mahoney
Maloney
Marleau
McGuire
McLellan
Minna
Murphy
Nault
Normand
Owen
Pagtakhan
Parrish
Péric
Peterson
Phinney
Pratt
Proulx
Regan
Rock
Savoy
Serré
Shepherd
St-Jacques
St. Denis
Stewart
Telegdi
Thibeault (Saint-Lambert)
Tonks
Ur
Vanclief
Whelan
Wood– — 139

Allard
Assad
Augustine
Bakopanos
Beaumier
Bellemare
Bertrand
Binet
Bonin
Boudria
Brown
Bulte
Caccia
Caplan
Carroll
Catterall
Charbonneau
Collenette
Cullen
DeVillers
Drouin
Eggleton
Farrah
Folco
Frulla
Gallaway
Goodale
Harvard
Hubbard
Jackson
Jordan
Karygiannis
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Kraft Sloan
Lastewka
Lee
Lincoln
Macklin
Malhi
Marcil
McCallum
McKay (Scarborough East)
McTeague
Mitchell
Myers
Neville
O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)
Pacetti
Paradis
Patry
Peschisolido
Pettigrew
Pillitteri
Price
Redman
Robillard
Saada
Scherrer
Sgro
Simard
St-Julien
Steckle
Szabo
Thibault (West Nova)
Tirabassi
Torsney
Valeri
Wappel
Wilfert

NAYS

Members

Abbott
Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)
Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska)

Anders
Bachand (Saint-Jean)
Barnes (Gander—Grand Falls)
Benoit
Bourgeois
Burton
Cardin
Chatters
Comartin
Cummins
Davies
Duceppe
Elley
Forseth
Gallant
Gauthier
Godin
Grewal
Guay
Hanger
Harris
Herron
Hill (Macleod)
Jaffer
Keddy (South Shore)
Laframboise
Lanctôt
Loubier
Marceau
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
McDonough
Meredith
Mills (Red Deer)
Nystrom
Paquette
Perron
Proctor
Reed (Halton)
Reynolds
Roy
Schellenberger
Skelton
Sorenson
St-Hilaire
Strahl
Vellacott
White (North Vancouver)
Yelich– — 95

Bigras
Brison
Cadman
Casey
Clark
Crête
Dalphond-Guiral
Doyle
Duncan
Epp
Gagnon (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay)
Gaudet
Girard-Bujold
Goldring
Grey
Guimond
Harper
Hearn
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
Hilstrom
Johnston
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Lalonde
Lill
Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni)
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Masse
Ménard
Merrifield
Moore
Pallister
Penson
Picard (Drummond)
Rajotte
Reid (Lanark—Carleton)
Rocheleau
Sauvageau
Schmidt
Solberg
Spencer
Stinson
Toews
Wayne
Williams

PAIRED

Members

Asselin
Calder
Desrochers
Fournier
Gagnon (Champlain)
Grose
McCormick
Provenzano

Bergeron
Copps
Duplain
Gagnon (Québec)
Graham
Manley
Plamondon
Tremblay– — 16

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the question is on the main motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Ms. Marlene Catterall: Mr. Speaker, I believe you would find consent in the House to apply the vote just taken to the motion now before the House.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to proceed in this way?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Julian Reed: Mr. Speaker, I do not wish to be recorded.

The Speaker: The hon. member wishes not to be recorded?

Mr. Julian Reed: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: With that change, is it agreed to apply the vote?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Nick Discepola: Mr. Speaker, I would like to be recorded as voting in favour of this bill.

Mr. Dale Johnston: Mr. Speaker, Canadian Alliance members will be recorded as voting in favour of this motion, with the exception of some who may identify themselves as voting opposed.

The Speaker: The hon. members of the Alliance Party who wish to oppose will stand and their names will be called by the clerk to try to save time.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Guimond: Mr. Speaker, members of the Bloc Quebecois vote against this motion.

[*English*]

Mr. Gerald Keddy: Mr. Speaker, the Progressive Conservative Party will be recorded as voting no.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Speaker, the members of the NDP will be voting no to this motion.

● (1550)

[*Translation*]

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

(Division No. 180)

YEAS

Members

Abbott
Allard
Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)
Assadourian
Bagnell
Barnes (London West)
Bélanger
Bennett
Bertrand
Binet
Bonin
Boudria
Brown
Bulte
Byrne
Cadman
Caplan
Carroll
Catterall
Charbonneau
Coderre
Cotler
Cuzner
Dion
Drouin
Easter
Elley
Eyking
Finlay
Fontana
Frulla
Gallaway
Goldring
Grey
Harb
Harris
Harvey
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
Hubbard
Jackson
Jennings
Jordan
Karygiannis
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Kraft Sloan
Lastewka
Lee
Alcock
Anderson (Victoria)
Assad
Augustine
Bakopanos
Beaumier
Bellemare
Benoit
Bevilacqua
Blondin-Andrew
Bonwick
Bradshaw
Bryden
Burton
Caccia
Cannis
Carignan
Castonguay
Cauchon
Chatters
Collenette
Cullen
DeVillers
Discepola
Duncan
Eggleton
Epp
Farrah
Folco
Forseth
Fry
Godfrey
Goodale
Hanger
Harper
Harvard
Hill (Macleod)
Hilstrom
Ianno
Jaffer
Johnston
Karetak-Lindell
Keyes
Knutson
Laliberte
LeBlanc
Leung
Lincoln
Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni)
Mahoney
Maloney
Marleau
McGuire
McLellan
Meredith
Mills (Red Deer)
Mitchell
Murphy
Nault
Normand
Owen
Pagtakhan
Paradis
Patry
Péric
Peterson
Phinney
Pratt
Proulx
Redman
Reynolds
Rock
Savoy
Schmidt
Sgro
Simard
Solberg
Spencer
St-Julien
Steckle
Stinson
Szabo
Thibault (West Nova)
Tirabassi
Tonks
Ur
Vanclief
Wappel
White (North Vancouver)
Williams
Yelich– — 181
Longfield
Macklin
Malhi
Marcil
McCallum
McKay (Scarborough East)
McTeague
Merrifield
Minna
Moore
Myers
Neville
O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)
Pacetti
Pallister
Parrish
Penson
Peschisolido
Pettigrew
Pillitteri
Price
Rajotte
Regan
Robillard
Saada
Scherrer
Serré
Shepherd
Skelton
Sorenson
St-Jacques
St. Denis
Stewart
Strahl
Telegdi
Thibeault (Saint-Lambert)
Toews
Torsney
Valeri
Vellacott
Whelan
Wilfert
Wood

NAYS

Members

Anders
Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska)
Bigras
Brison
Casey
Comartin
Cummins
Davies
Duceppe
Gallant
Gauthier
Godin
Guay
Hearn
Keddy (South Shore)
Laframboise
Lanctôt
Loubier
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Masse
Ménard
Paquette
Picard (Drummond)
Reid (Lanark—Carleton)
Roy
Schellenberger
Wayne– — 53
Bachand (Saint-Jean)
Barnes (Gander—Grand Falls)
Bourgeois
Cardin
Clark
Crête
Dalphond-Guiral
Doyle
Gagnon (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay)
Gaudet
Girard-Bujold
Grewal
Guimond
Herron
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Lalonde
Lill
Marceau
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
McDonough
Nystrom
Perron
Proctor
Rocheleau
Sauvageau
St-Hilaire

PAIRED

Members

Asselin
Calder
Desrochers
Bergeron
Copps
Duplain

Points of Order

Fournier	Gagnon (Québec)
Gagnon (Champlain)	Graham
Grose	Manley
McCormick	Plamondon
Provenzano	Tremblay– — 16

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Bill read the third time and passed.)

The Speaker: Order, please. I wish to inform he House that, because of the ministerial statement and the deferred recorded divisions, government orders will be extended by one hour and eight minutes.

The hon. member for Calgary Centre on a point of order.

* * *

[*English*]

POINTS OF ORDER

FIRST NATIONS GOVERNANCE ACT

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC): Mr. Speaker, I have a point of order concerning the government's intention to call Bill C-7, an act respecting leadership selection, administration and accountability of Indian bands, and to make related amendments to other acts.

This bill was reported back to the House on Wednesday with amendments, in fact, with over two dozen amendments. That is proof that at least in the mind of the committee this bill was flawed when the cabinet approved its introduction into the House of Commons at first reading.

This bill was the subject of considerable committee work. When he presented the report last Wednesday, the chair, the member for Nickel Belt, said the following, and I quote from *Hansard*, Wednesday, May 28:

> The committee held a total of 61 hearings on this bill from January 27 to May 27, 2003, travelled over a period of four weeks from Prince Rupert, British Columbia—

The Speaker: Order. The right hon. member will want to make his point promptly. It is a point of order and not a debate yet. I know he will want to come to the point. I have not grasped what his point of order is and I would like to hear that, please.

Right Hon. Joe Clark: Mr. Speaker, I will forgo the details of the committee chair's report, simply to say that he indicated at what great length there were hearings and discussions across the country.

The bill has now been returned to the House. We are at report stage. The government itself has introduced new amendments, which indicate that in its own judgment the original bill was flawed.

We must remember the purpose of report stage. In speaking about committee stage and report stage, the Speaker said on March 21, 2001:

> Accordingly, I would strongly urge all members and all parties to avail themselves fully of the opportunity to propose amendments during committee stage so that the report stage can return to the purpose for which it was created, namely for the House to consider the committee report and the work the committee has done, and to do such further work as it deems necessary to complete detailed consideration of the bill.

Mr. Speaker, it is impossible for the House to consider the work that the committee has done without the transcripts of the committee debates. The work of the committee extends beyond the passage of amendments.

The committee travelled. It took evidence. The committee debated and deliberated on the record. Why would it keep and publish a transcript if it were not primarily for the reason of assisting the House at this report stage and at third reading?

Members of the House are entitled to have the entire case in front of them before we are called upon to judge the work of the committee. I make this case emphatically. We are entitled to have it "dans les deux langues officielles du Canada", in both official languages of Canada.

These transcripts are not yet available in both official languages. Members of the House were and are today precluded from being able to examine the work of the committee in their language of choice. If we cannot know the evidence, we cannot decide if amendments are needed at the report stage.

The Speaker should not assume that the report stage is simply a matter of setting out party positions. At the report stage all members of the House, especially those who are not members of the committee, have an opportunity to propose amendments. The Chair should not assume that members are always acting as party representatives. There may well be members, who have an interest in the bill, who may have been shut out of the process by their parties or for other reasons. I think, for example, of the member for LaSalle—Émard who is known to have an interest in this matter.

The report stage is the members' opportunity to suggest amendments. However they cannot do that in an informed way unless the full record of evidence taken by the committee is available in both languages.

All members, regardless of party affiliation and regardless of the language they speak, have that right. The committee blues are not in both languages. They are in the language used in debate, but they are not available in translation. This puts a large number of unilingual members at a disadvantage and makes it impossible for them to consider the work done by the standing committee.

● (1555)

[*Translation*]

The majority of the committee's discussions were held in English. It was almost impossible for the more or less unilingual francophones to understand exactly what was happening during the committee's debates.

[*English*]

As of yesterday at least six meetings, including the most contentious and important meetings, have not been available in both official languages.

One thing is certain, if committee evidence is withheld from members in a language they can understand it is not likely that they will propose amendments.

Bill C-7 is about the rights of first nations. The government is now infringing on the linguistic rights of the members of the House by calling the bill for House consideration before members have available the full record of the standing committee.

The government is making it impossible for members to do the job the Speaker described in the ruling of March 21, "to consider the work the committee has done".

I want to quote the Constitution of Canada, the charter of rights—

The Speaker: I appreciate the zealousness of the right hon. member for Calgary Centre on his point of order but this matter has been dealt with in the House before. As a very experienced member I am sure he is well aware of previous Speakers' rulings on the very point he is seeking to make.

Citing the Constitution, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, statutes or whatever he is going to cite will not help the Chair in making a decision because, as he knows, the Chair has to make its decision based on the precedents in the House and the practice of the House.

I am quite prepared to deal with the matter. I think I have an obligation to do so. I refer him to the decision of Mr. Speaker Parent on page 4350 of *Hansard* for March 3, 2000.

On that occasion, in dealing with a very similar point, because the argument was that certain of the proceedings of the committee were unavailable to the members at this very stage, the Speaker quoted, and I will cite him. He said:

> —I am quoting Speaker Francis who was quoting Speaker Macnaughton. This is what Speaker Macnaughton had to say on March 17, 1965 as reported on page 12479 of *Hansard*:
>
> Accordingly, I would strongly urge all members and all parties to avail themselves fully of the opportunity to propose amendments during committee stage so that the report stage can return to the purpose for which it was created, namely for the House to consider the committee report and the work the committee has done, and to do such further work as it deems necessary to complete detailed consideration of the bill. The basic question is whether or not a bill in the House of Commons can be discussed, assuming that the evidence has not been completely finished in its English and French printing. I have made a search of the records since Confederation, and there is no case that says that a bill in the House of Commons which is up for discussion cannot be proceeded with until the evidence has been filed. If we were to accept the suggestion of the hon. member for Lapointe, emotionally pleasing as it may be, nevertheless procedurally in my opinion it would be completely wrong, and would establish a very bad precedent.
>
> Again Mr. Speaker Francis stated and I quote from page 4631 of *Hansard* dated June 13, 1984:

And the right hon. member was in the House at that time.

> I really do feel uncomfortable when hon. members do not have the transcripts. However, I am guided by the precedent of Mr. Speaker Macnaughton. I am guided by the fact that the rules are silent as to the form of printing.

Therefore I must decline to accede to the suggestion of the right hon. member that transcripts of proceedings in committee must be available before the House can proceed with a bill. It is not uncommon for bills to be called before committee proceedings have been completely transcribed and are available in both official languages let alone one.

Accordingly, while I have great sympathy, and I know there are dozens of members of the House who want to read these proceedings of this committee, I am afraid that I am not able to accede to his request. Accordingly, it would not be out of order for the House to proceed with the bill at this time, barring some other problems that may arise.

● (1600)

Right Hon. Joe Clark: Mr. Speaker, I am bound to accept your ruling of course, although I note that the ruling by Mr. Speaker Macnaughton was made before the passage of the charter and before the passage of the Official Languages Act, which is binding upon this House of Commons. However you have ruled on that matter.

However I hope there will be an opportunity at some other time, including by the government House leader who has always shown his respect for the Official Languages Act, for us to ensure that the act applies to this House of Commons regardless of precedents that were established before the Official Languages Act became the law of Canada.

The other point I want to make, and which I believe is of equally great importance in this matter, relates to our fiduciary obligation to aboriginal people. We are not here debating any old bill. We are dealing with a bill that has to do with the rights of a people who exist in a fiduciary relationship with the Government of Canada, with the Parliament of Canada and with the Crown of Canada. They are in a status that is unlike the status of others whose positions we may be debating here.

There is an unusual obligation upon us in the House to ensure that there is a full opportunity for all members of Parliament who have an interest in these issues and, indeed, a full opportunity for the people to whom we owe a fiduciary responsibility, the first nations people, to know what was discussed in committee and to be sure that they are in a position to bring forward appropriate amendments to deal with matters in the House.

On Bill C-7 the first nations community had only a matter of hours, on a question that goes to the heart of their capacity to self-govern, to make recommendations after the committee reported. The reprinted bill containing the committee amendments was available for less than 24 hours before the government's arbitrary deadline for the submission of report stage amendments.

Mr. Speaker, at the heart of your office is the duty to protect minorities and minority rights. You will be familiar with the great words of the distinguished clerk of the House, Sir John Bourinot. I quote from Marleau and Montpetit at page 210 which says:

> The great principles that lie at the basis of English parliamentary law have...been always kept steadily in view by the Canadian legislatures; these are: To protect the minority and restrain the improvidence and tyranny of the majority, to secure the transaction of public business in a decent and orderly manner, to enable every member to express his opinions within those limits necessary to preserve decorum and prevent an unnecessary waste of time, to give full opportunity for the consideration of every measure, and to prevent any legislative action being taken heedlessly and upon sudden impulse.

This is a matter that goes fundamentally to the interests of a minority in the country but a minority that enjoys special protections under our history and under our practice in the House. Regarding no other group have steps been taken by this Parliament to allow them to sit as members of parliamentary committees when matters affecting their future were considered. For no other group was the process of federal-provincial consultation open to include representatives of those peoples during constitutional discussions, as I have cause to know happened during the preparation of the proposals for the Charlottetown accord.

There is no question that first nations people have an unusual status in the country. There is no question that the subject matters here are of great concern to them. We have seen that before committee and in demonstrations across the country. They have not had the time to consider what was being discussed in committee. They have not had the time to make representations to us in the House as to changes or amendments that might improve the bill. First nations people have had about 24 hours to deal with hundreds, perhaps thousands of years of history that could be changed by a quick decision of this House of Commons.

We have an obligation to protect the rights of minorities generally, but certainly to ensure that the people here, to whom we have a fiduciary responsibility and who are most vulnerable to changes that might be undertaken, have the time themselves to bring forward recommendations for amendments that could be considered by the House.

● (1605)

I respectfully hope, Sir, that you will consider the fundamental importance of this issue and not allow the government to proceed with a bill which, as a practical matter, denies the opportunity for first nations people to consider discussions in committee and to make their own representations as to changes that should be made in legislation that would fundamentally affect their lives.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will certainly echo the comments of the hon. member from the Conservative Party. I would argue as well that not only have first nations representatives not had adequate time to deal with the fundamental aspects of this bill and how it will affect their communities and their lives, but members of Parliament as well have had inadequate time to deal with the bill.

What I would draw your attention to, Mr. Speaker, is that in the order of business today we are about to go to Bill C-7, and you will note that it says for Bill C-7, the first nations governance act, that we will be dealing with both report stage and second reading concurrently, that is, we will be dealing with them together.

Mr. Speaker, I want to point out to you that about a year ago the bill was very briefly debated in the House and then it was immediately sent to the committee on the basis that it had such a broad scope and such a magnitude and impact on all of the first nations in Canada that the committee would undertake very broad consultations to get people's reactions and so on. The bill subsequently was bridged over a prorogation and in fact, as we know, for the past year the committee has had sometimes very acrimonious debates and discussions about the bill, and now here we are back at report stage.

Even at the committee, in fact, there were something like 200 amendments. Now we are here at report stage with 104 amendments, two of which, I might say, are very substantive changes to the bill. One of them deals with the creation of an ombudsman. Another deals with the establishment of a first nations governance centre.

What I really want to address here is that we are short-circuiting the established procedure for how we deal with a bill in each of its particular stages. I would refer you to the stages in the legislative process as laid out in Marleau and Montpetit on page 625, where it is stated quite clearly, in referring to the stages of a bill:

> These stages "constitute a simple and logical process in which each stage transcends the one immediately before it, so that although the basic motions—that the bill be read a first (second or third) time—ostensibly are the same, and seem repetitious, they have very different meanings".

I would certainly agree with that, but in this particular case we are already back at report stage and second reading when we have not yet had an opportunity to debate the bill in terms of its principle, especially given that this bill is now likely to be changed substantially in terms of government amendments that are coming forward.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask you to consider this and to make a ruling that when we have dealt with report stage, that is, when we have dealt with all of the amendments that are before us in the groups that exist and so on, at that point afterwards we would then go back to second reading, which properly we should have done before, to debate this bill in principle. Only then will we be following the logical steps that have been set out in the practice of the House for many years.

To circumvent that is an injustice not only to first nations people, who have had a great deal of concern about this bill, but also to members of Parliament who want to have due time and adequate opportunity to debate and discuss each stage of the legislative process on the bill.

● (1610)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will add to what my colleagues have already said by passing on a message at the request of my Bloc Quebecois colleagues.

In order to debate a question like Bill C-7 properly, it is important for all proceedings of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs to be available in both official languages. Some of my colleagues wish to be involved throughout the debate, that is at the report stage, and even more so on second reading, if you allow a debate on principles, and they do not have access in French to the bulk of the deliberations on matters of importance in connection with Bill C-7. The bulk of the deliberations were in English only.

Even the Chair, who is a francophone, spoke almost exclusively in English throughout the deliberations. In order to facilitate debate—

The Speaker: I have already made a Speaker's ruling on this for the Right Hon. member for Calgary Centre. I therefore do not wish to hear arguments on this point.

If the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot has any arguments on other points, I will hear them, but it is hard to continue the debate when a ruling has already been made on the matter he is raising at this time.

● (1615)

Mr. Yvan Loubier: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of privilege.

Is it normal that in a Parliament where the use of both official languages is promoted, that one of the two official languages is not available for debate on an issue as important as Bill C-7? Even first nations have not had all of the privileges needed to assess a bill as important as this one which will shape their lives.

Is it not to be expected that here—

The Speaker: It is not a question of what is normal, it is a question of practice in the House. Nor is it a question of official languages.

In my ruling, I said that even though the blues were not available, the House could go ahead with the study of a bill. This is a ruling that has been handed down by other speakers. The committee minutes are not required to have been tabled in the House before proceeding to report stage. That is the ruling. It is not a language issue.

The hon. member for Calgary Centre also raised the language issue. If we can proceed with report stage in the House without the committee blues, which is the case, then it is case closed. It is not at all a language issue. That is the problem the hon. member now has.

I can hear arguments on other points, but not on the matter of the committee blues. As far as I am concerned, that is not an issue. I repeat that I have already ruled on this matter, based on precedents adopted by at least three of my predecessors here in the House.

If the House wishes to change the Standing Orders on this, as members know, I serve the House and I am prepared to implement a new order. However, for the time being, the rules are clear, the precedent is clear and I have already given my ruling on this point.

Is there anything else?

Mr. Yvan Loubier: Mr. Speaker, are my rights as a francophone real in this Parliament? Are the rights of francophones in the Bloc Quebecois and all parties real in this Parliament? Can Parliament circumvent the Charter of Rights and Freedoms?

As my colleague from Calgary Centre said earlier, the inspiration for early decisions of the Speakers of this House on committee blues was drawn from whatever existed before the days of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

As French-speaking parliamentarians in this House, we, that is I and those of my French-speaking colleagues who want to debate the same way and have the same privileges as our English-speaking colleagues, do not have such a right in this Parliament. Is that what you are telling us?

The Speaker: No, that is not what I said. All I said was that if nothing was available in either French or English, we can carry on with the debate in the House.

So, even if minutes of proceedings have not been printed, we can still carry on. It is not a matter of the rights of one group or another, but a matter of the rights of the House. Speakers have always contended that it was not necessary to have the transcripts of committee proceedings to commence the next stage in the House. Today, we are considering the bill at report stage, and we can carry on.

[*English*]

To deal with the question raised by the right hon. member for Calgary Centre, the other point, and the hon. member for Vancouver East, I want to say that their arguments, while novel, were ones that caused the Chair some concern in that there were no precedents cited by them to suggest that the Chair in the House had any authority to restrain the government from proceeding with stages of bills in the House that have come back from committee or that are here.

To deal first with the hon. member for Vancouver East, she suggested that it was incumbent on the Chair to require that the House have a debate at second reading after the report stage has been disposed of because the bill had been referred to committee before second reading and therefore there had not been a proper debate at second reading.

I stress that the reason for the rule permitting referral of bills to committee before second reading was to allow the committee greater latitude in its study of a bill. Adoption of a bill at second reading means the House has agreed to the principles of the bill, and the amendments that would be permitted in committee are thereby much restricted because no amendment would be admissible in the committee or at report stage that was contrary to the principles of the bill adopted by the House at second reading.

I understand that the purpose of referring bills to a committee before second reading is to give the committee maximum latitude in the amendments that it may wish to consider. Accordingly, I do not feel it is incumbent on the Chair, the decision of the House having been made to refer the bill before second reading and thereby give the committee this additional latitude, to order that there be a subsequent debate at second reading.

There will be, of course, a debate at third reading of this bill. It is in effect the second crack at the arguments about the principles of the bill and the whole content of the bill as amended, and that means as amended both by the committee and at the report stage. Accordingly, I must rule that the hon. member for Vancouver East has not made a good argument in favour of the Chair intervening in that regard.

To go back to the right hon. member for Calgary Centre, he suggested that it was somehow incumbent on the Chair to defer the report stage on this bill to a later date because the committee's opportunities for amendment were somehow restricted or inadequate.

I am afraid I do not see any authority that he has raised which would give me any reason to think that I ought to deal with matters in this way. I am here to protect minority interests in the House, he is correct, but to argue that the Speaker has some obligation to minority interests outside the House, when I am the Speaker of the House and not someone who is boosted in here with supernatural powers, I think is asking more than should be expected of a Speaker. I think the obligation of the Speaker as servant of this House is to decide matters within the House and decide whether minority rights are in fact being protected.

● (1620)

[*Translation*]

I know that the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot suggested that I am failing to protect the rights of some people by overlooking the fact that certain documents are not available in both official languages. However, I have already said the following.

[*English*]

I have to follow the practices and rules of this place, and we have proceeded to do different things in this House that sometimes minorities do not like, but it is a question of following the rules.

In this case, the report of the committee was brought to the House last Wednesday. The reprinted copy of the bill was available Thursday morning, I am told, at 9 o'clock. The time for filing amendments was extended until last evening, so in fact we have had Thursday, Friday, in effect the weekend, and Monday, for a review of the draft legislation, whatever was available from the committee in terms of the transcript of its proceedings and so on.

I have seen bills proceeded with in much greater haste than this. I am sure the right hon. member himself remembers many bills that have gone much more quickly than this one. Sure, they may not have been as contentious, and there may not have been as many amendments, but I remember ones where we have had extensive amendments and had a lot of votes in the House. I have not gone back to check the time, from the time of report until it was called for report stage, but I think hon. members will find that it often happens very quickly.

Accordingly, I do not see how the Chair can intervene in this case. I think there has been some time, and whether everyone would agree it was reasonable, of course I would not expect we would get agreement on that kind of point. I appreciate the right hon. member's disagreement with that and the forcefulness of his argument, but in the circumstances I do not feel it is a situation where the Chair may intervene in this matter, and accordingly, I am afraid, I suggest that his point of order is not well taken.

Right Hon. Joe Clark: Mr. Speaker, this discussion deals with very fundamental questions in our country. I am not of a mind to challenge the Speaker's ruling on the matter because he may well be interpreting the rules as we have them in a way that is defensible.

We often talk about the distinctive nature of this country. We talk more about it now than we have for some time. Two of the elements of the distinctive nature of this country are first, that we are a country that has adopted and respects the spirit of the recognition of two official languages. That is one distinct characteristic of the country that applies to us as much as to other Canadians.

Second, this Parliament, as an instrument of the Crown, has an unusual responsibility with regard to first nations people who have historic rights of self-government that are different and often under threat.

We have a situation now in which a proposed bill has been discussed in committee and where the first nations people, with a remarkable near unanimity, have expressed their profound concern about the legislation.

I do not want to go over the details of it. I simply want to make the point that you, Mr. Speaker, are faced with a decision here where the rules respecting language that you would have us follow and which bind us now are rules that were set before the law was changed.

The second point concerns an obligation that has not been changed and that can never be casually shed. It is our particular obligation regarding the rights of first nations people. The rules may point in one direction. The nature of the country points in another direction. You are the Speaker of the House. You are also consequently an official of this country. We are representatives of this country, its people, its history, and its distinctive nature.

Two of those elements make us a distinct country in the world and make us a community of which so many Canadians are so proud. Two of those elements are at issue here: the official languages and the fiduciary responsibility of this Parliament toward the first nations people.

Mr. Speaker, I do not know how you will resolve this, but I believe it cannot be resolved simply by turning back to the rules and precedents that were taken in other times.

● (1625)

The Speaker: I believe the right hon. member has forgotten two things. In my ruling I cited three Speaker's rulings on this issue. One was from 1965, but the other two were from 1984 and 2000, both after the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Official Languages Act had been enacted.

I am sorry to disappoint the right hon. member, but in my view those rulings were made at the appropriate time. They reflect the existence of certain practices in the House which bind me, and at no time has the House sought to change the rule in respect of committee reports and transcripts of committee proceedings.

Notwithstanding the fact that those two rulings were made, ample opportunity was there for the House to adopt changes in its practice if it wanted to. It chose not to. I am sure the right hon. member would agree with me that it would be inappropriate for the Chair to start playing fast and loose with the rules by changing them at his whim because certainly my opinion on what the rules ought to be might be quite different from his on certain points and similar on others. It is not for me to make those changes.

The second thing, with respect to the fiduciary obligation he mentions, will no doubt be the subject of discussion in the House during the course of the debate. I point out to him that the committee report that has brought this bill back is in both official languages. The reprint of the bill and all the amendments that the committee proposed to this bill are in both official languages and are available here for debate. There are no doubt others moved and proposed by members which are on the Notice Paper that we will hear about presently. Those are also available to the House in both official languages.

Certainly, the question of fiduciary responsibility of the Crown to first nations people will be the subject of debate during the discussion of this bill, I have no doubt about that. But I respectfully suggest that it is not for the Speaker to determine when debate on this bill will start. That is a matter for the government, as has been the practice in the House since 1867. The government normally calls the business of the House and accordingly, I will now call for orders of the day.

Mr. Rick Laliberte (Churchill River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I wish to offer a copy of the Indian treaties that created this country. This is a treaty nation that we call Canada. When we created this country, we negotiated with the Crown by treaty negotiation.

This is a copy of treaties I would like to bring forward to the House so that when the relationship of the aboriginal people, the first nations of Canada, is being debated in the House this body of evidence, the true relationship between the Crown and the original nations of the country, is reflected upon.

I present this to you, Mr. Speaker, for your deliberation on where these treaties can be placed in this debate.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Churchill River.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

FIRST NATIONS GOVERNANCE ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-7, an act respecting leadership selection, administration and accountability of Indian bands, and to make related amendments to other Acts, as reported (with amendment) from the committee.

[*English*]

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Deputy Speaker: There are 104 motions in amendment standing on the Notice Paper for the report stage of Bill C-7.

[*Translation*]

The Chair will not select Motions Nos. 31, 32, 36 through 40 and 86 since they require a royal recommendation.

The Chair will not select Motions Nos. 2, 3, 7, 12, 15 through 20, 22, 24, 33, 41, 44, 50, 51, 72, 73, 75, 81, 83, 89, 100 and 101 because they could have been presented at committee.

The Chair will not select Motions Nos. 25, 34, 35, 47, 77, 87, 95 and 97 because they were defeated at committee.

● (1630)

[*English*]

All remaining motions have been examined and the Chair is satisfied that they meet the guidelines expressed in the note to Standing Order 76(5) regarding the selection of motions in amendment at the report stage.

The motions will be grouped for debate as follows:

Group No. 1, Motions Nos. 1, 13, 14, 21, 23, 26 to 30, 42, 43, 45 and 46.

Group No. 2, Motions Nos. 4 to 6, 8 to 11, 48, 49 and 52 to 70.

[*Translation*]

Group No. 3 is Motions Nos. 71, 85, 93 and 99.

[*English*]

Group No. 4, Motions Nos. 74, 76, 78 to 80, 82, 88, 90, 91, 94 and 102 to 104.

[*Translation*]

Finally, Group No. 5 is Motions Nos. 84, 92, 96 and 98.

The voting patterns for the motions within each group are available at the table. The Chair will remind the House of each pattern at the time of voting.

[*English*]

I shall now propose Motions Nos.—

Right Hon. Joe Clark: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I think the only thing I can do is reserve the right to raise this matter at a later point.

I must tell you, sir, that no one who was present in those committee hearings would believe that there was an opportunity to move the amendments that you have ruled were capable of being moved in committee. That is simply not the case.

There have been points raised on the floor of the House about the proceedings in the committee. I believe there is a ruling still outstanding from the Speaker with regard to precisely that point.

However, what is incontestable is that that committee was conducted in such an unruly way and conducted in a way that rammed through the government's agenda without the opportunity for parliamentarians to propose amendments. It is simply not credible to anyone to suggest that the amendments could have been made at that time.

In one meeting last week, in the space of less than an hour and a half, the chair of that committee suspended hearings to his own call six separate times. There was no opportunity to present amendments. For the suggestion to be made now that there was an opportunity then and that it precludes our opportunity now to improve the bill is an affront to democracy and to Parliament.

I do not know under the rules what we can do about it. I want to signal now my intention to reserve my right to raise parliamentary matters with regard to behaviour which is not only unfair to Parliament, but fundamentally unfair to first nations people.

● (1635)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvan Loubier: Mr. Speaker, the way I understood the Speaker's ruling on the point of order raised by the right hon. member for Calgary Centre was that members who had not taken part in the committee's deliberations would be able to present amendments at this stage, particularly since we are dealing with both report stage and second reading concurrently, and that would make the Speaker's words a bit more interesting.

So, with regard to the two groups you have mentioned, for the second group you have said that these could have been presented in committee. These amendments could have been presented while the committee was sitting.

But members who did not participate in the committee's business and who did not have an opportunity to present these amendments—because of a time allocation motion, in fact—could not have presented them, because they were not present at the committee sittings.

So, like my hon. colleague from Calgary Centre, I understood that the Speaker had accepted this principle and was about to make a ruling in favour of my colleagues who had not participated in the debate, who had not presented amendments to the committee, so that they could present them at the report and second reading stage.

Now, you have just said that at least 20 amendments that each have some value will not be chosen, because they could have been presented in committee. The hon. members who want to present these amendments were not present when the committee was sitting, and I felt that the Speaker was leaning toward a broader interpretation of the business before us.

I, too, wish to reserve a right to raise at a later point this decision to eliminate the amendments in Group No. 2 which you have just mentioned.

The Deputy Speaker: I understand fully that if, at a later date, the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot or our other parliamentary colleague, the Right Hon. member for Calgary Centre wishes to raise the question of privilege again, that is always within the realm of possibility and within their rights.

With regard to the final comments of the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, the issue is not about whether a member attended a committee meeting or not. The essence of this matter relates to opportunity. In its opinion, the Chair, necessarily, as was raised by the Right Hon. member for Calgary Centre, is quite clear on this and was well aware of this committee's work on this bill.

So, I simply want to assure the House that the Chair made its decision after considerable reflection and with all due respect for the rules of the House related to this stage of the debate, and my report is consistent with this decision.

Now, let us move on.

[*English*]

I shall now propose Motions Nos. 1, 13, 14, 21, 23, 26 to 30, 42, 43, 45 and 46 in Group No. 1 to the House.

MOTIONS IN AMENDMENT

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—St. Clair, NDP) moved:

That Bill C-7, in the Preamble, be amended by replacing lines 15 and 16 on page 1 with the following:

"nance that are in accordance with their individual traditions and customs"

Hon. David Kilgour (for the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development) moved:

That Bill C-7, in Clause 4, be amended by deleting lines 31 to 34 on page 4.

[*Translation*]

Right Hon. Joe Clark: Mr. Speaker, the minister you named as the seconder of the motion is not in the House.

● (1640)

The Deputy Speaker: I believe that Mr. Owen is in the House.

It is Mr. Kilgour for Mr. Nault, who moved the motion, seconded by Mr. Owen.

[*English*]

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—St. Clair, NDP) moved:

That Bill C-7, in Clause 4, be amended by replacing line 34 on page 4 with the following:

"least 30 days before the vote is conducted"

[*Translation*]

Ms. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ) moved:

That Bill C-7, in Clause 6, be amended by replacing line 12 on page 7 with the following:

"members of a first nation of the first nation's law-making powers and, in"

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Pallister (Portage—Lisgar, Canadian Alliance) moved:

That Bill C-7, in Clause 7, be amended by adding after line 20 on page 8 the following:

"(2) The council of the band shall make available to the members of the band and the residents of the reserve a copy of the budget referred to in paragraph (1)(a) at least 14 days before the budget is presented in accordance with the financial management and accountability code."

Hon. David Kilgour (for the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development) moved:

That Bill C-7, in Clause 10, be amended by replacing lines 16 to 32 on page 9 with the following:

"(3) The Minister, or a person or body designated by the Minister, may carry out an assessment of a band's financial position, and require that remedial measures be taken, where

(a) the Minister has reason to believe that a deterioration of the band's financial health compromises the delivery of essential programs and services;

(b) financial statements have not been made publicly available within the period specified in subsection 9(3); or

(c) the band's auditor has denied an opinion, or has given an adverse opinion, on the band's financial statements."

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—St. Clair, NDP) moved:

That Bill C-7, in Clause 10, be amended by replacing lines 16 to 23 on page 9 with the following:

"(3) The Council of a band shall, by band law, authorize an impartial person, or an impartial body established under section 18 to carry out an assessment of a band's financial position and to require that remedial measures be taken when any of the following circumstances become known"

Mr. Brian Pallister (Portage—Lisgar, Canadian Alliance) moved:

That Bill C-7, in Clause 10, be amended by replacing lines 16 to 18 on page 9 with the following:

"(3) The Minister, or an independent and impartial person or body designated by the Minister, may at any time carry out an assessment of a band's financial or other"

[*Translation*]

Ms. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ) moved:

That Bill C-7, in Clause 10, be amended by replacing line 20 on page 9 with the following:

"necessary, the Minister may require, only with the consent of the members of the first nation, that"

● (1645)

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Pallister (Portage—Lisgar, Canadian Alliance) moved:

That Bill C-7 be amended by deleting Clause 11.

That Bill C-7, in Clause 16, be amended by replacing line 23 on page 12 with the following:

"of the band and the charging of reasonably and fairly set fees for"

That Bill C-7, in Clause 16, be amended by replacing line 35 on page 12 with the following:

"for and powers of eviction, and a schedule of shelter fees for band-owned dwellings;"

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—St. Clair, NDP) moved:

That Bill C-7, in Clause 16, be amended by deleting lines 15 to 20 on page 13.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ) moved:

That Bill C-7, in Clause 17, be amended by replacing line 28 on page 13 with the following:

"products, fish and wildlife;"

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Pallister (Portage—Lisgar, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, before I get into the gist of my comments on this package of amendments, I want to take the opportunity to speak in support of the comments made by my colleague from the Bloc who raised some very legitimate concerns. I do not think they were properly dealt with here today.

The Speaker made the comment in giving his ruling regarding this bill that he was not in possession of supernatural qualities. I believe that was the phrase he used. Neither, unfortunately, are members of the House.

This method of proceeding places us at some difficulty certainly in dealing with these amendments. It continues a very unfortunate approach which the government has taken since the outset of the bill, which is to push it forward regardless of obvious and strong opposition to it. It is for that reason the official opposition has supported the position of pulling the bill and reversing this process which we believe to be dangerous, damaging and naive.

I do not doubt for a minute that the Minister of Indian Affairs is well meaning and well intentioned. That is not at issue here. I do not doubt for a minute that the people who designed the Indian Act were also well intentioned and well meaning.

The problem is obvious to anyone who has listened to the heartfelt presentations of people who came to our committee. The problem is that well meaning and well intentioned do not create good governance when, at the fundamental base of our relationship with our aboriginal friends in the country, is the assumption that the government knows better than they do how to govern them and that they are not entitled to the same rights, privileges and freedoms as the rest of us in the country. As long as that assumption is upheld in legislation, there will continue to be the types of problems we have seen and unfortunately which mount daily in our country with aboriginal peoples particularly on reserve.

Our party does not support segregation. We do not support the dehumanization of aboriginal Canadians. We do not support legislation which perpetuates the assumptions that created the Indian Act and subsequent pieces of legislation and subsequent policy which created a divide and which daily creates a divide between aboriginal and non-aboriginal Canadians.

The government is trumpeting this legislation as a panacea for the problems that face aboriginal Canadians, which are very real and very serious problems. It is trumpeting this legislation as accountability and is using buzz words like transparency and cost effectiveness when it describes the legislation. None of those words apply when one looks at the bill. None of those words are legitimate in describing the bill.

How can we create a system of good governance when we simply further empower bureaucracies and the already powerful and do nothing to address the underlying problems that face aboriginal people?

The priorities that aboriginal people have raised through their associations are very real and urgent, yet the government proposes to spend hundreds of millions of dollars enacting unwanted legislation which will not address the problems of accountability or transparency on reserves. Despite the fact that it is well meaning, the outcome will be perverse, as has been the case repeatedly throughout our history.

The reality is that one cannot create better governance from Ottawa. One has to create better governance by strengthening the individuals and the families who are aboriginal people. By strengthening them and empowering them and giving them greater ability to participate as full Canadians, that might lead to better governance.

The bill is both good and original in that the good parts are not original and the original parts are not good. The good parts are simply a rewrapping of existing policy that describes the relationship we already have to some degree with aboriginal chiefs and councils.

● (1650)

I have had the privilege of meeting with over a hundred chiefs from across Canada and they are not afraid of accountability. In fact in any respect, in any measure, the requirements that are imposed on them and on their councils to be accountable and to be forthright in their financial dealings are greater than for any other level of government in the country.

Certainly one would argue that for many chiefs and councils they are far more accountable and far more transparent in their dealings than the government opposite. According to the Auditor General, the onerous requirements are already very real. On average 168 forms per year have to be completed by band chiefs and councils and the red tape and regulations are deeper than a Manitoba snowbank. The reality is the bill would replace a regime of 168 different forms with perhaps 178. If 168 forms did not create accountability, why would anyone believe 178 forms would do that? It will not.

The fact remains that the bill is a continuation of the same paternalistic, colonialist approach that we have been using for far too long and it should be discarded. The approach is wrong, it is mistaken and it is hurtful to aboriginal Canadians and to the relationship that we should be building together.

The minister proclaims that the bill contains provisions for band elections. However the Indian Act already has provisions for band elections and that has not been a problem on the vast majority of aboriginal reserves. The FNGA would simply codify the flawed failed policies of the Indian Act. It is more than that and it is more dangerous than people have come to realize. Perhaps committee members who listened to the presentations understand but I am afraid that many observers do not, those who did not follow carefully the proceedings.

The bill would give additional powers to chiefs and councils, powers that the minister has argued are a natural step toward self-government. In this bill he is giving the power to chiefs and councils to make laws, to set fines and to impose jail terms. If they have a problem with that, he would also institute a system where the enforcement officer could be appointed by the chief and council to ensure there is no problem with that anymore.

On many bands that would not be a problem. Chiefs and councils have exercised those kinds of powers for years and they have developed systems to ensure accountability. What the bill would do, however, is empower 600 plus chiefs and councils to set up their own law enforcement officers. If they have a problem with that, they can go to a redress officer who would be accountable to and appointed by the chief. I have yet to speak to an aboriginal Canadian who thinks that makes any sense. I and the Canadian Alliance certainly do not.

The government is trying to create a picture of accountability but the reality will not be the case. Unfortunately some chiefs do abuse their powers sometimes. Some chiefs here do it. The reality is keeping chiefs accountable, whether they are aboriginal or not, is an ongoing challenge for all of us. Setting up a system that further empowers chiefs, at the expense of those who are less powerful, in fact some would argue in many reserves powerless, would be dangerous because it would make the already vulnerable more vulnerable.

For that reason, the Canadian Alliance will be opposing the bill. For that reason and many others, we would urge every member of the House to oppose the bill. It is poorly thought out. It is naive to the maximum. It will cost Canadian taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars that could be used to build houses, to improve water quality and to address the educational problems that face our aboriginal friends. These are where our resources should be going. The bill is a mistake.

● (1655)

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 Lanark—Carleton, Trade; the hon. member for St. John's West, Fisheries.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot.

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in this debate. I would have liked to have seen one a little longer and a little more democratic, to be frank.

When a bill like this one is referred to the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, Northern Development and Natural Resources, and when it comes back to the House and goes through report and second reading stage at the same time, there is one very important stage of debate missing.

That said, the Chair has had this issue raised with him and a ruling has been made, until further notice. I will, if I may, comment on the amendments you have consolidated into one group, ours in particular. The purpose of these was to ensure that the wording of the bill really constitutes an expression of self-government for the first nations, or in other words, their inherent right to self-government.

As has been seen from clause one to clause fifty-nine, certain powers cannot be given to the first nations. Moreover, we ought to think twice before giving them what they already have, because they have an inherent right to self-government, and this has been recognized in a number of decisions by Canadian courts, including the Supreme Court of Canada, as well as by the United Nations. All that we need to do is help translate this inherent right to self-government into real power and real government, in other words, a third level of government.

Bill C-7, however, does not do that. On the contrary, it is so "prescriptive" and restrictive for the first nations that it ends up being a kind of Indian Act, modernized 2003 version, when it is universally acknowledged everywhere in Canada, and even elsewhere, that the Indian Act and its application over the past 130 years has feudalized and infantilized the first nations and led to the belief that they were incapable of managing their own affairs.

Incidentally, I was surprised to see an article in *La Presse* today by a columnist who trotted out, one after the other, the government's demagogic rhetoric, as presented by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. In her column, she tried to convince readers, first, that aboriginal communities have widespread management problems on reserves, when in fact, the Auditor General demonstrated last year in her report that the problem is not at the reserve level or among first nations communities, but that the problem was at the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

This department lacks transparency. Try to find information on the $6 billion part of the budget that is used for payments that could very well be made to Liberal cronies or to people called co-managers, who earn up to $60,000 working part time on reserve management. If there are five of them, you can do the math, Mr. Speaker.

I tried to get a breakdown on the figures from the budget for the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development to see exactly where these billions of dollars are going.

First, the door is closed in your face; you have to use the Access to Information Act. Second, the Auditor General said it last year, more than 90% of first nations communities have external audit reports. Try to find that level of transparency anywhere else, including here. Third, the bill tries to have us believe—and that is what the amendments we introduced touch on—that there is no accountability among first nations. However, this is not true.

The current Auditor General and the one before her said it, and repeated it, "We are asking too much of first nations. They have to produce about 300 reports every year". This is just about one report per day that they have to send to the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. What do they do with these reports in the department? Most of the time, they take them and throw them out.

That is the reality for first nations. When people say that first nations have management problems, or that there is a lack of transparency or accountability, they are trotting out prejudices, which is what happened today in *La Presse*, and which is what several members of the government continue to do.

On the basis of isolated cases of mismanagement and incidents that can happen in any good society, they would have us believe that Bill C-7 is necessary, because of a widespread problem in terms of management, transparency and accountability.

● (1700)

Bill C-7 was presented as a necessary step toward abolishing the Indian Act and speeding up the advent of aboriginal self-government. It is not true.

Witness the fact that, in many first nations communities in Quebec as well as in the rest of Canada, the pace of some negotiations in connection with self-government picked up. Self-government has been successfully implemented and it is the only way to go.

Negotiations with the first nations must pick up speed to, first, settle their land claims and, second, assert their inherent right to self-government on this land, which they will negotiate with the federal government, because of its fiduciary responsibility. That is the only way to go.

The Erasmus-Dussault commission made this point merely five years ago. Over the next 20 years, a big project must get underway, where everyone works toward speeding up the process to restore dignity to the first nations and ensure that a real third level of government is established. That is what needs to be done.

There is no need for this kind of bill, which further subjugates the first nations even though the language is that of 2003. The way to go is self-government and settling specific claims faster.

There are 500 such claims now in progress—and they are making no progress. Why not? Because energy, time and money are being spent—and the first nations will be asked to spend some in the near future as well—to create a bill that is completely useless in terms of advancing relations between the federal government and the first nations. It is completely useless in terms of improving the social and economic conditions of Canada's first nations. It is also completely useless in terms of accelerating recognition of the first nations' inherent right to self-government.

It is scandalous that we are still stuck here, after 55 days of debate in committee, 136 hours of clause-by-clause consideration of the bill —clause by clause. The opposition has moved amendments that were all rejected, even though their purpose what to recognize the inherent right to self-government and recognize that common sense must apply in the things we do to advance the cause of the first nations in Canada and the things we do to improve the relationship between us.

We find ourselves in a situation where, currently, our relations have not been improved by this bill. This bill has been unanimously condemned across Canada. This is another criticism I would make to minister, who said that he held consultations and that there were people who supported this bill. In his opinion, only the leaders who want to retain their powers are opposed.

I went to Kenora, which is in the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development's riding, where people were protesting in the streets. Some 7,000 to 8,000 first nations representatives were marching against Bill C-7. Let us do the math. Surely there are not 7,000 aboriginal leaders in Canada. The aboriginals do not want this bill. It is not just the chiefs.

There were 30 to 50 first nations representatives who took part in our deliberations, day after day, evening after evening and often night after night, because the chair had turned up the heat and kept us working at all hours to analyze Bill C-7. Apparently, this is the brainchild of the Prime Minister, who is the former Minister of Indian Affairs and who wants to reproduce his 1969 white paper.

Bill C-7 is truly a carbon copy of that white paper. There is a desire to municipalize the powers of the first nations, when they should be a third order of government, with real powers over the fate of first nations peoples. Second, the federal government wants to free itself of its fiduciary duty. This concern is in the bill. Third, there continues to be a lack of respect for the first nations, which are nations, even according to the UN.

We are going to try to get our amendments adopted, which will restore some dignity to this debate.

Mr. Gérard Binet (Frontenac—Mégantic, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to take part in the debate on this amendment to the First Nations Governance Act.

When a new code is proposed, this amendment will require band councils to advise all members and residents of the reserve within 15 days for the code to be adopted.

As my distinguished colleagues know, this amendment was put forward and accepted by the committee. The government cannot support this amendment.

Before addressing the specific problems that this amendment raises, I would like to thank the members of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, Northern Development and Natural Resources for their work.

As my distinguished colleagues know, this legislation was sent to committee for review before second reading. Our objective was very simple: take every opportunity to improve the legislation as much as possible. I believe we reached our objective.

The first stage of the consultations on the First Nations Governance Act was, for aboriginals, the first clear opportunity in our entire history to influence the development of legislation and to profoundly change the direction of the Indian Act by establishing a solid foundation for a transition to self-government.

Sending Bill C-7 to committee before second reading gave us another opportunity to consult first nations people on improvements to be made to it. As members know, when a bill is submitted to committee before second reading, significant changes can be made.

That is precisely what happened and I would like to commend the members of the committee for their careful and meticulous review of the First Nations Governance Act.

Although the government does not support the amendment that we are talking about today, that does not diminish the value of the numerous improvements made to this legislation in committee. For instance, the committee put forward several amendments on the provisions of Bill C-7 in reaction to the concerns of first nations witnesses who wanted us to clarify the matter of search and seizure powers.

Through its work, the committee helped draft amendments that had been suggested at report stage. Those amendments respond to the concerns of first nations in matters of acquired rights by bands that have already adopted codes.

Although I applaud the excellent work done by the committee and I readily acknowledge the underlying good intentions of this amendment—in other words the desire to give communities enough notice about proposed new codes to be ratified—this amendment inadvertently causes true problems for first nations.

This amendment will limit the government's ability to make regulations on ratification votes and will limit the first nations' ability to express their views on these regulations in the third stage of consultations, which will take place after the bill is passed. As my distinguished colleagues know, a regulation may not conflict with a law. Consequently, criteria established by law cannot be changed by regulation.

Moreover, this amendment does not allow the drafting of regulations that would fully respect the rights of members living off the reserve. This would be in direct violation of section 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, as noted by the Supreme Court of Canada in the Corbiere decision. A fifteen-day notice will probably be too short to enable all members living off the reserve to take part in a ratification vote in an informed manner.

One of the problems with this amendment is that there is no provision allowing an extension of the fifteen-day period. Amendment CA4 would not allow any flexibility with regard to the notice period, contrary to what the first nations could request during the third stage of consultations.

The amendment uses the expression "non-member residents". This is not consistent with the language used in the First Nations Governance Act nor is it consistent with current practices. Non-member residents of a first nation do not have the right to take part in a ratification vote on a code.

Finally, the expression "all members of the band" includes minors who are not entitled to vote on a code proposed by a band.

● (1705)

For all these reasons, this amendment, despite the good intentions of those who wrote it, does nothing to improve Bill C-7; it takes away from it.

If, as the amendment proposes, the purpose is to provide early notification to the parties involved in a ratification vote, I would like to assure my distinguished colleagues that this position will be taken into consideration in the regulations now being drafted.

Furthermore, these regulations will be strengthened through consultations and will reflect the needs and interests of Canadian aboriginal communities.

Before closing, I would like to encourage all of my distinguished colleagues to support Bill C-7, the First Nations Governance Act. This bill is based on several principles, including transparency, the requirement for accountability and reparation. These principles are the pillars of democratic governments. They are also the pillars of the right to self-government for Canada's first nations.

Once Bill C-7 has been passed by the House of Commons and has received Royal Assent, it will mark the beginning of a new relationship between first nations peoples, their administrations and the Government of Canada.

● (1710)

[*English*]

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC): Mr. Speaker, I have to begin by disagreeing with my colleague who just spoke. I believe that rather than respecting the pillars of democracy and of autonomy, the bill undermines them and does so in a way that, apart from being bad law, is an abandonment and betrayal of our fiduciary responsibility to the first nations people of the country.

Let me list some of the fundamental faults with the legislation. The first nations communities in Canada are beset by poverty, illness, discrimination and a simply unacceptable level of suicide and despair. Those are the problems the Government of Canada should be addressing as a priority. Instead, those problems are ignored and its priority is to bring in this piece of so-called governance legislation.

Why is the government doing that? It is doing that because it feeds the caricature in the country, the caricature that aboriginal people are unable to care for themselves, that they will behave in a way that is unacceptable, that they have to be called to order by the paternalists in Ottawa. That is why it is introducing the bill now.

No one with any experience with first nations people would deny that there is abuse in some bands. Of course there is. Abuse is not limited to band councils and to aboriginal people. I have to say that, to my knowledge, no chief of a first nation has yet been rewarded for his abuse by being appointed as ambassador to Denmark.

Everyone agrees that there are problems of governance but if those problems are to be resolved in a way that works, then the people who are seeking to govern themselves and who have a right that predates our Confederation to govern themselves, they should be fully involved in these discussions and, blatantly, they have not been.

A second fundamental problem with the bill is that it will not work. It is premised upon co-operation between the government and the first nations people. They have made their opposition to the bill known across the country, and emphatically so. Anyone who believes that people who consider themselves betrayed by the legislation will suddenly step into line and co-operate with the government is living in some kind of dream world.

I do not know what the motivations of the government were in bringing it forward, but surely there comes a time when moving through a piece of legislation that we realize it is creating its own roadblocks, that it has built within it the seeds of its own destruction. This requires the co-operation of the first nations people. It requires their trust. It does not have their trust. It does not have their confidence. It will not have their co-operation.

Therefore, we have a piece of legislation that simply will not work. It is not only a waste of the time of Parliament to be dealing with legislation of this kind, but it is a running abuse. It aggravates the relation, which is always difficult, always tender, between first nations people and Parliament.

A third fault is that the bill purports to offer aboriginal people the right to govern themselves, to take steps in that direction. It does the opposite. What it does is empower the capacity of Ottawa to run their lives for them. It is the opposite of what it pretends to do.

[*Translation*]

It is the opposite of the commitment made by successive governments and parliaments here, in Canada, both in constitutional debates and in debates in the House of Commons. It is the opposite of our commitment to respect the inherent rights of aboriginal peoples and their capacity to govern themselves.

● (1715)

[*English*]

I was around the House when the so-called Penner report came forward, a report that was extraordinary in its approach to aboriginal people in that it allowed them to take part as equals in the discussion of matters affecting them.

I had the duty, not as a volunteer, to chair the Charlottetown round of negotiations where aboriginal groups were present at the table. They were not able to vote but they were able to take part as equals in every other respect in discussions of their future.

Let us put aside the fact that the Penner report has not been adopted and the fact that the Charlottetown accord was rejected. We must note the principle that was established. If we are going to make progress on these fundamental issues we have to treat the aboriginal communities as though they have rights of their own and a respect which we, in turn, will extend to them.

Let me tell members about something that happened regularly during the Charlottetown accord. Aboriginal people, who would come into the process bearing centuries of suspicion, nonetheless, sat down around a table with elected leaders of the country and worked out agreements which, in retrospect, were historic. The salient fact is that they did not survive a referendum but they demonstrated that when there is a genuine willingness on the part of Canadian governments that are not aboriginal governments to work honestly and openly with first nations people then the first nations people will reciprocate.

The agreements in that situation were not imposed on anyone. They arose from honest discussion. Aboriginals were not demonstrating outside the room. They were participating inside the room. Surely that is the practice that should be followed here. Indeed, that has been the precedent. It was the precedent and the momentum that guided us right through the establishment of the royal commission on aboriginal affairs, a royal commission that was widely hailed in the country and which earned, although it was not easy, the respect of aboriginal communities across the country and which, in its recommendations, was rejected as surely as the recommendations in the Penner report were.

I will not elaborate now but the decision of the Chair earlier today to rule out certain recommendations that were made by the Penner commission and the royal commission, which were adopted by the other place with respect to the capacity of first nations people to be involved in these processes, is again another turning away of a process that had begun to bear fruit on matters of fundamental difficulty and importance to the country.

The amendments that are in this first package deal, in essence, with two broad matters. One cluster of amendments has to do with ensuring that the legislation proposed here respects the rights, customs and traditions of aboriginal people. They are not major amendments in and of themselves except for what they symbolize, which is respect for the cultures of people who were here before the rest of us were here. It shows a fundamental respect for those cultures. It provides some kind of guarantee that the law we pass in legislation, which they have not been able to influence, will take into account their histories and their traditions, and those should be supported.

I was sorry to hear, if I understood him correctly, the parliamentary secretary say that the government would slam the door also on that recognition of the cultures, the rights and the history of the people the government purports to govern in legislation which falsely pretends to give authority of self-government to them themselves.

The other amendment, which is a government amendment, would in effect establish and enlarge the power of the Government of Canada, the minister, to intervene in the activities of band councils. The minister, or a person or body designated by the minister, may carry out an assessment of a band's financial position and require that remedial measures be taken on a range of others. On what basis? On what proof? That the minister has reason to believe that there is something wrong.

● (1720)

We have reasons to believe every day in the House that there is something wrong with the way the Government of Canada operates. Yet that standard of proof is not adequate in the House. That standard of obligation should not be seen as adequate with regard to the minister's right to intervene willy-nilly, as he or she chooses, without any kind of spelled out criteria in the affairs of aboriginal people.

I realize, Madam Speaker, that my time on this package has expired, and I thank members for their attention.

Mr. Pat Martin: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would like to ask if there is unanimous consent to allow the right hon. member for Calgary Centre to carry on with his speech and go beyond the 10 minute rule for speeches at third reading.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): The House is its own master. Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—St. Clair, NDP): Madam Speaker, I suppose I am not surprised that I am up on my feet at this point, as opposed to the member for Calgary Centre, given the way the bill has been handled from its inception.

In that regard I must admit as tragic as the bill is, and the way first nations have been treated, the process they have been put through is equally tragic. That was continued today in the ruling we received from the Speaker. Although I know in his thinking that he conducted himself with all good faith, I could not help but think, as I listened to his ruling, that in effect he was saying that it was okay that we had these prior decisions, which I do not think are applicable.

The issue today, in terms of the process, is whether people whose primary first language is French will be treated equally. That was the point he missed, and so much of the bill reflects that.

I think the Speaker, if he had thought this through more thoroughly, there was an option to say that there was some systemic discrimination in the process against people whose primary first language was French, and they were not being treated equally. Those of us whose first language is primarily English get an advantage because we get access to the transcripts of the committee in total. Having sat in on part of the committee discussion, almost all of it was in English.

On the record to the Speaker, if his ruling will stand, as it appears it will at this point, the House has to look at the process. There is no way we can have systemic discrimination against one of the two languages in the country. We cannot have that perpetrated in the House, which I believe is the effect of the ruling we received today.

Going back to the manner in which the first nations have been treated, I am sure members will hear repeatedly from members on the government side about how they consulted. What members will not hear from that side is that the consultation resulted in a ratio of people who made presentations either as witnesses in person or testimony and briefs in writing. I believe that ratio was 191 to something like 10: 191 were opposed to the bill and opposed to the governmental approach contained in the bill and only eight or ten people supported the approach.

Mr. Pat Martin: And one of them was the minister.

Mr. Joe Comartin: Yes, one of those, as my colleague for Winnipeg Centre points out, was the minister himself. That is the type of support the bill has in the country. The opposition from the first nations was overwhelming, as it was from the bar associations, constitutional experts and the list goes on.

I also want at this point to take the opportunity to recognize the work done by the member for Winnipeg Centre from my party and the member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot from the Bloc. Their work was supported throughout by the first nations' people, supported in a way that it is impossible for me to use words to describe. They were there and were very clear on what their positions were. They were denied access to the table, even though one of the resolutions put forth to the committee on aboriginal affairs was that representation should be sitting at that table.

There are precedents for this. We have done this before. Again, the government denied that to the first nations in spite of that specific recommendation from the member for Winnipeg Centre.

The first nations were in great numbers. We set a record in terms of the number of hours that was spent on this committee, and they were there right to the very end, showing their opposition consistently, forcefully and also with great dignity, much more so than we saw from the chair of this committee and most of the representatives on the government side.

● (1725)

The legislation itself is so thoroughly wanting. Not only will members know that through the group of amendments we have put forward but they also will hear that repeatedly from those of us who have analyzed this bill to any degree at all. It misses the essential point that we are not dealing with an inferior group. That is in fact the way the first nations are treated in the legislation.

The government approaches it on the basis that the Government of Canada is superior. It approaches it on the basis of a very paternalistic attitude toward the first nations. We have heard that the basic rationale behind the legislation is to do away with the paternalism contained in the Indian Act, paternalism that is very clearly out of date. It was out of date at the time when it was first used back in the 1800s, when the Indian Act was first passed. The reality is it has been perpetuated in this bill.

It is quite obvious from the attitude we have from the government that it is quite prepared to shove this bill through as is. We saw that in the committee in the way people were treated: members of Parliament, witnesses and people who were just there as observers. We have no doubt we are going through a process that, to a great extent, maybe to a total extent, is a farce as far as the first nations are concerned. We have not treated them with the respect and with the rights that we have accorded and have recognized in Canada. They are not being treated that way at all.

If we go back and look at some of the Supreme Court of Canada decisions, this and preceding governments have been told very clearly that there are inherent rights and the government has no right to interfere with them, none whatsoever. The government does it repeatedly in this bill.

We were told in the committee that this bill would not survive challenges in the court. Whole sections will be thrown out. What does that mean? It means that again the first nations will spend millions of dollars in legal fees to fight this bill all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada. It is quite obvious, if the government's attitude does not change, that is where it will end up. Ultimately, in large part it will be struck down, and therefore we are going through a process.

We have spent all this time fighting this, trying to get the message through to the government that the bill cannot go anyplace. It does not have the support of the first nations, of the aboriginal people across the country. We repeatedly heard that. The minister has deluded himself into saying that it is only a few of the leaders. We heard him say that repeatedly in this process.

A few weeks ago thousands of people from the first nations were in his riding trying to get the message finally through to him. This does not have the support of the first nations, of the aboriginal community, but he is going to push it ahead. What are we going to find? Five to ten years from now we will be back here again, and hopefully at that point we will do it right.

● (1730)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ): Madam Speaker, you will understand that we cannot address the amendments grouped by the Chair without first paying tribute to the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot.

It is not every day in Parliament's history that dozens upon dozens of hours are devoted to improving a bill. The hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot and other members of this House have done so, feeling that the amount of energy invested had to be at least equal to the amount of fixing the bill required.

For Quebec sovereignists, which is what we are, relationships based on equality, respect and recognition have always been extremely important. We know what being a nation is all about; we know what it means to aspire to real development; we know what it is like to want real development tools. Unfortunately, in spite of the hard work of committee members and all the energy they have put into making this bill better, it remains unacceptable.

The hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot has been extremely well advised to devote energy to this and to come to the conclusion that, after Erasmus-Dussault, and after the National Assembly, led by Premier Lévesque, passed a resolution recognizing the first nations, it makes no sense in 2003 to come up with a bill that is as colonial, backward-looking, old fashioned and disrespectful as the one before us.

During committee meetings, we experienced the gamut of emotions. We first hoped for collaboration, expecting to find among Liberals some sensitivity and openness to arguments from the opposition. Unfortunately, except for one, the member for Frontenac—Mégantic whom I wish to acknowledge because I believe he was in a different category in terms of the attitude of members of the committee, history will not look kindly on the Liberals. They proved to be dull-witted, narrow-minded, insensitive—

Mr. Yvan Loubier: Rude.

Mr. Réal Ménard: Rude, indeed. Even cavalier, and I believe this is parliamentary language. Sadly, this is what we were faced with.

When we vote on this bill, and we will give it all our energy, there will be no hope, no energy, no cooperation strong enough to get all opposition parties to delay the passage of the bill. This is a commitment we make today before first nations. We will use all parliamentary means, with dignity and respect for our institution, but we will delay the passage of the bill as long as possible.

If, through the most strange misfortune, this bill were passed, imagine in what situation we would find ourselves. We have received letters from first nations leaders saying that the opposition to the bill was not a superficial or a knee-jerk opposition, but rather an opposition rooted in all first nations communities.

If members were to pass a bill which is not wanted by first nations, imagine in what situation we would place ourselves as parliamentarians first of all, but also what this would bring about in the future. This is the lack of understanding we are faced with.

How could Liberal members be so insensitive? Last night, in the parliamentary dining room—this is a place where I can be found occasionally—I happened to run into the former member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce, whom I can name, Mr. Warren Allmand. This former solicitor general of Canada and enlightened mind has worked at the democratic rights centre. He is a Liberal progressive, in the noble tradition of the word "liberal", and there are a few of them in the Liberal Party, although their numbers are dwindling. Warren Allmand was telling us that he found it incredible that this government would go ahead with such a bill.

● (1735)

We can certainly not say that Warren Allmand is keen on sovereignty-association. He does not have his Bloc Quebecois membership card and he does not hobnob with sovereignists.

The well-informed sections of Quebec society and Canadian society all reject this bill. Hence, when a man like Warren Allmand, a progressive man who believes in the Liberal Party and who has given the best years of his life to the Canadian Parliament, urges the members to vote against this bill, we cannot help but listen to him.

It is sad. What will happen is sad. We will be using every parliamentary means to ensure that this bill is not adopted promptly and diligently. However, we must warn the government. If it decides to use its stubborn and empty-headed majority to impose an unwanted policy by the sheer weight of its numbers, I can tell you that the consequences of such an action will be felt in all communities and that the Liberals will pay for it. The aboriginal communities will see to it that their dignity is respected.

How many Liberals are there now in the Liberal Party caucus? There are 178 or 179 members. There are 178 members, I was right the first time. This, Madam Speaker, reminds us of the movie *The Silence of the Lambs*. I do not know if you have seen it, and I do not want to comment, particularly since the Liberal caucus wavers between *The Silence of the Lambs* and *Les Invasions barbares*. However, I cannot imagine that they will not show a shred of conscience and of vigilance, if only out of respect for what the Liberal Party was a few years ago, and that they will not try to get the bill defeated.

The member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot made a proposal in the parliamentary committee, inviting all colleagues, all those wishing to work in good faith, of whom there are many of all political stripes, to reject the bill. We are going to go the Aboriginal Affairs, Northern Development and Natural Resources Committee and bring to life the Erasmus-Dussault report. That is what the member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot proposed, and we must hope his voice is heeded. The worst thing that could happen is for the bill to be passed, for the minister to proceed in an authoritarian, bitter, headstrong and obtuse manner. This will surely lead to catastrophe. If this is what the minister does, it will lead to catastrophe and we cannot imagine that it would not stir up a lot of opinions.

My friend across the way—not the one directly across, where the Conservative contingent such as it is is placed, but his neighbour to the left—might do this out of friendship for John Turner. That might be one motivation.

The subject is too important for us to allow it to be passed as it is. Why must this bill be rejected? It must be rejected because it is not a nation-to-nation agreement; there is not a relationship of equality. It is a relationship in which the central government wants to call the shots and still supervise the first nations.

Recent years have seen a lot of history made. I remember the former Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development apologizing in this House for the harm done to the first nations. One might have expected a ministerial apology to be followed with some measures of reparation.

We are deeply saddened, but we still have a lot of energy. Once again, we are not going to let this get us down.

● (1740)

This is such a serious matter that I would ask you Madam Speaker, if there is unanimous consent for me to speak for another ten minutes. This is a matter of such importance.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

[*English*]

Mr. David Chatters (Athabasca, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise and take part in this debate today because this is a such a vitally important issue. Unfortunately, I am truly disappointed with the way the government has handled the bill and this issue. I thought perhaps there really would be a change in the way the government was going to handle these affairs of aboriginal governance and that it would move forward with a more cooperative attitude, not only toward first nations but toward members of other parties in the House of Commons.

However, it truly looks like the government intends to handle this piece of legislation as it has handled the whole Indian issue for the last 150 years, and that is to make a mess of it in the worst possible way. Aboriginal people living in aboriginal communities across Canada will continue to suffer because of it. The government had an opportunity to do some things here that truly would have improved the lives of aboriginal people, but unfortunately the further we get into this it looks more and more like the government has no intention of seriously making an effort to accommodate anybody's views but its own, in spite of what the minister said when he introduced the bill and as he travelled across the country talking about introducing it at committee stage.

The minister said he would allow all parties to introduce amendments to make it a better bill, to come forward with a bill that would solve some problems and make life better for Indian people. In fact, it very much appears that this was not his intention at all. It appears that the only amendments accepted by the government are amendments put forward by the government itself, other than some minor tinkering around the edges. It was not particularly honest with regard to the parties in the House or to aboriginal people, the Assembly of First Nations and others, who protested the bill, to mislead them in the way that the government has. I am so disappointed with that, because I thought we had a chance to make some changes here.

The ombudsman clause is one example, and we will get into more depth on that in a later group of motions. Certainly I was led to believe that the government was going to listen to opposition parties and in fact introduce a national aboriginal ombudsman who would be effective and would fulfill a need for people having trouble dealing with their local aboriginal government. It appears that what we have in this bill will not do that in any way.

Right from the very beginning, the government has done what it has done for the 10 years I have been here. It moves to tackle an issue, but instead of solving problems as they appear it has a tendency to identify controversial issues and then avoid dealing with those issues.

Bill C-7 could have been a good bill had the minister lived up to his commitment of allowing changes, but it also could have been a good bill had he solved the real problem behind the bill before introducing it. The real problem, of course, is the conflict in our Constitution between the inherent right of aboriginal people and the right of the Government of Canada to legislate on behalf of aboriginal people. That is the source of the conflict behind the bill. Instead of dealing with this, the minister bypassed it and asserted his constitutional right as a minister of the crown to legislate on behalf of aboriginal people while completely disregarding the inherent right of aboriginal people. I do not know how can he possibly expect to have any kind of success in dealing with the legislation if he approaches it in that way.

● (1745)

Inevitably this piece of legislation, if it is rammed through this place as it inevitably will be by the look of it, without any substantive change, will end up before the Supreme Court at some point in time. I am sure that at least parts of it will be struck down by the courts and will have to be changed. On top of that, it will cost hundreds of millions of dollars for both sides to engage in that process, whereas that money could have been better used to improve the lives of aboriginal people out in the communities.

It is so unnecessary. If the government and the minister would simply sit down in an honest and open way and engage in debate to resolve those outstanding issues that need to be resolved before we can proceed to this kind of legislation, we could have some success here. Unfortunately the minister did not do that. There will be a debate some day in this country on that issue. Just as there was a debate on the sovereignty association of Quebec with the rest of Canada, there will be a debate on the issue of aboriginal sovereignty and the definition of inherent right to self-government.

In the meantime, we keep stumbling along and poisoning the well, so to speak, in our relationship with aboriginal people, to the point where it is almost impossible to accomplish anything meaningful with first nations across the country. That really is unfortunate.

Anyway, having rambled on about the general meaning of the bill, I would like to make a few comments about this group of amendments. There are a couple of points that need to be made about these amendments.

The first amendment was proposed by the government itself. The bill originally required the band codes to be presented to the band membership 15 days before a vote so the members could look at the codes and make a decision, before the vote was prepared, to accept or reject the codes. The minister himself removed the entire clause in this amendment. There were other amendments to extend the 15 days, but it kind of blew me away that the minister took out what I saw as a chance for accountability to band members. The minister totally removed the clause, which does not make a lot of sense to me.

An amendment was proposed by our party to delete clause 11 in its entirety. It deals with the creation of a band appointed ombudsman. As I suggested earlier, from the very beginning the government promised the creation of a national office of aboriginal ombudsman, which would hear complaints from members who were having trouble dealing with their band and band bylaws and so on and so forth. The government apparently intends to introduce such an office, but with such restrictions that it will be totally meaningless.

For one thing, the government's version of the created office would require band members to go through the process of approaching the locally appointed ombudsman and then proceeding through a series of hoops before they can get to the national ombudsman. That would make it totally ineffective, simply because if that has to happen that particular member will be so intimidated by that time there is no way it is going to be effective. Of course the office of the national ombudsman in the legislation as it now stands will provide an opportunity to actually hide any complaints rather than make them public and deal with them.

I certainly will talk a lot more about the office of the ombudsman in another group of amendments, because it is my big issue in the bill. I thought it was vitally important, but now I think it has been totally neutered in the bill and will be useless.

● (1750)

Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak in support of the amendment to subclause 10(3) of Bill C-7, the proposed first nations governance act.

As members may be aware, as tabled last June, subclause 10(1) of the bill requires band councils to identify, advise their members of and resolve significant breaches of their financial management and accountability codes or the fallback regulations.

Under subclause 10(3), the minister would retain discretion to do assessments of the band's financial situation. The bill does not currently limit when these assessments may be conducted. However, the minister would, and I emphasize this, only as a last resort also retain discretion to require remedial measures in the following circumstances:

> (a) a deterioration of the band's financial health that compromises the delivery of essential programs and services;
>
> (b) the failure to make financial statements...available...; or
>
> (c) the denial of an opinion, or an adverse opinion, by the band's auditor on the band's financial statements.

Financial accountability is an important component of all democratic governments. It is therefore one component of the proposed first nations governance act.

The proposed act will help ensure that first nations governments involve their members when adverse financial circumstances arise in their communities. During the first phase of consultations, many first nations citizens said they wanted more information about their communities, including information on financial matters. The existing provisions of the bill respond to that input.

During public hearings conducted by the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, Northern Development and Natural Resources, first nations expressed concerns over the scope of the minister's powers under subclause 10(3). During its review of the bill, the committee examined subclause 10(3) more closely and made significant recommendations that respond to those concerns.

The committee is recommending that the bill contain authority for the federal government to develop regulations defining what constitutes a "deterioration" of a band's financial health and the nature and scope of the minister's power to intervene and implement remedial measures.

Another amendment would provide the minister with the authority to delegate the assessment of a band's financial situation to an external person or body, such as a first nations institution, which would then report back to the minister on appropriate remedial measures.

The committee also paid particular attention to the fact that assessments could be carried out at any time. The government agrees that subclause 10(3) should provide more clarity with respect to when these assessments may be undertaken. This amendment will therefore ensure that these assessments can only be done under the same extreme circumstances, already mentioned, that apply to the implementation of remedial measures.

As members of the House are aware, a first round of consultations took place to help inform the development of the proposed first nations governance act. A second round, led by the standing committee, took place to examine the contents of Bill C-7 and to obtain input from first nations in order to improve the bill.

Once the proposed first nations governance act receives royal assent, a third round of consultations will begin, this time dealing with regulations and implementation issues. As mentioned, these consultations will include the development of the regulations defining the nature and scope of the minister's powers under subclause 10(3). These consultations will ensure that these and other regulations passed to support the proposed act respond to the needs and aspirations of first nations communities across Canada.

In closing, let me say that the government appreciates the work of the standing committee in strengthening subclause 10(3) and encourages the members of the House to support this worthy amendment that builds on this excellent body of work.

● (1755)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Yves Roy (Matapédia—Matane, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would first like to thank the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, who did outstanding work in the committee, as well as all the hon. members on the opposition benches who have kept up this fight I believe is essential.

And why do I think this fight is essential? Because it is a fight for democracy itself. It is the struggle of nations who want to manage their own affairs, who want to steer their own course to the future. The characteristic of a nation is that it has the power to govern itself, to make its own rules, to pass its own legislation and to make decisions on behalf of its citizens.

Perhaps that goes back to the beginning of the whole story. What this bill does not properly recognize is the right of first nations to govern themselves and to say, "The needs of our citizens and our needs are thus and so. This is the way we wish to meet the needs of our citizens".

I think this proves how much paternalism—what I would call shameless paternalism—there is and probably has been since the history of this country began. We have to look back to see how badly the first nations have been mistreated over the years, since the Conquest in 1760. If we look at the past, at the beginning of the country's history, there was a fundamental mistake made. We talk about the Indian Act, but there are no Indians here; they are aboriginal people. It is a historical error to talk about Indians.

It began with a historical error and so it has continued. After the Conquest, reserves were created. But has anyone looked at the meaning of the word reserve? Has anyone looked in a dictionary to see what reserve means? We can look it up in the Canadian Oxford.

A reserve is a thing put aside for future use, an extra stock or amount that one might need later. It is a sad thing to see what this means in terms of the contempt of using such a restrictive word as reserve to name the aboriginal people's lands.

Of course, if you look further in the dictionary, you will see something else. I was intrigued by that word because I had discussions with aboriginal leaders. For those who do not know, there are two reserves in my riding. I should not use that word. There are two first nations, or rather one nation but two aboriginal territories in the riding of Matapédia—Matane. When I hear the word reserve, I find it difficult to accept. I thought that there must have been another meaning, that this word was used but was given a different meaning. But the meaning is indeed the one that can be found in the dictionary.

If one reads further in the Canadian Oxford Dictionary, one will see that it says, "In Canada, an area of land set aside for the use of a specific group of Aboriginal people". That is how the word reserve is defined in the Canadian Oxford Dictionary. Aboriginal people were put on lands set aside for them, and maybe we will deal with them at some point in the future.

That is what it means to a certain extent. It is totally degrading for first nations, for those people who were here before the white man, before the Europeans, and particularly before the Conquest.

As I was saying, what defines a nation is its power to determine the needs of its people and the way in which it meets those needs. What makes a people great is its ability to accept differences, to live with others. This is not exactly what this government is showing us.

The bill was referred to and discussed in committee. As my colleague mentioned earlier, this was done in a way that is totally unacceptable. It was done in a way that showed nothing by contempt for first nations, for those who appeared before the committee, for the elected representatives who are here, including the member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot.

● (1800)

He wanted the first nations to finally obtain recognition in this country, to finally have the freedom to decide for themselves and to meet the needs of their peoples.

When we visit aboriginal reserves and we talk to aboriginals and chiefs, we see the poverty in which people on some reserves are living. This poverty was created because they did not have the power to decide their own future and to resolve their own problems, and because a one-size-fits-all solution is being imposed on them, through this bill, from one coast to another, from the Atlantic to the Pacific or vice-versa. A one-size-fits-all solution is being imposed on them.

Why should aboriginals in the riding of Matapédia—Matane have to live with the same solution as those in British Columbia? They are different nations. These people do not necessarily have the same needs. They do not live in the same climate. They live in very different environments. So, why do we want to impose similar solutions on them? That is what this bill seeks to do, and this is unacceptable.

I am a Quebecker and, as you know, I am a sovereignist. I want and I defend the right of Quebec to become a true nation, a true people and a true country, simply because we want our fellow citizens to have access to the services we want them to have, the way we want, so that our children can grow up in a healthy environment that belongs to them.

So, why is this government denying the first nations this right? This is a historical refusal. We can go back to 1867. I could even go back further than that. In some cases, governments and governors prior to Canadian Confederation tried to eliminate the first nations. They tried to assimilate them, as attempts have been made to assimilate us, Quebeckers and francophones. This is something we have never accepted. And we will never allow the first nations to be treated this way, no more than we can accept having been treated this way or being treated this way.

After several meetings with the aboriginal leader, John Martin, I understood all the difficulties, such as in the Matapédia—Matane riding, he had experienced and all the scorn shown by Departments of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

When the chief of an aboriginal people comes to Ottawa for meetings with public servants, he is scorned and considered a nobody. He has come here just to report problems in education and ask for the cheque he has been promised for months. Because he did not get the money, he cannot hire teachers or special counsellors for children with problems on his reserve. This is unacceptable.

This government is responsible for most of the problems of the aboriginals. Because of this government, aboriginal peoples have big problems and live in poverty.

My colleague was talking about the management of Indian reserves, of Indian bands, of first nations. I should use the word nation because I do not like words like reserves or bands. I will use the words first nations, because they are really nations.

In education, they should have the authority and money needed to provide real education services to their children. I would like to know what their dropout rate is. How many young aboriginals cannot make it through high school because the education they get is not adequate?

Once again, I want to thank my colleague from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot and all those who took part in committee proceedings, opposition members and more particularly witnesses from the first nations. I hope that, for a change, the government will respect the vision of a nation that is different from theirs.

● (1805)

[*English*]

Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's West, PC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to participate in this debate. It is also a pleasure to follow my good friend and colleague from Matapédia—Matane. He and I sit on the fisheries committee together and I know the input he brings to committees.

There is something else. We are talking about a bill through which we should be showing respect for the first nations. It is extremely hard to show respect if we are not respected ourselves. The gentleman who just spoke is a highly respected gentleman within these circles. However, can we say the same thing for the government? I do not think we can certainly when it comes to dealing with the first nations.

I was amazed and shocked to hear a member from the government side talk about the work the committee has done. The committee passed recommendations. The committee discussed and deliberated. We all know that thanks to the government members the committee was a real sham, a farce. The government sent in the goon squad to ram through whatever the government wanted done. It did not matter what anybody else brought to the floor of the committee. The government was not going to pay any attention.

The government talked about our having the right to bring in amendments. It said it would extend the deadlines for amendments, anything at all to get itself out of a bind so that it could get the legislation to the House and ram it through. If it were good legislation and if the timeframe for Parliament was running out, everyone here would cooperate. But why is anyone not cooperating?

I could understand if it was a member or even if it was a party that was disgruntled and upset and was being obstructive, but everybody on this side of the House, every party in opposition, every opposition member on the committee has been saying, begging, pleading. With the proper amendments, we could make of this poor piece of legislation a piece of legislation which would be accepted by all, particularly by the first nations. What does government do in light of all of that?

If it was just the opposition parties and the members on the committee that were saying this and on the other hand the first nations had come to committee and said to us on this side that we were wrong, that our interpretation of the legislation was incorrect and that they did not want us interfering and suggesting and pleading and begging, but they did not say that. They are saying the same thing we are saying, which is that this is an extremely poor piece of legislation.

In fact the big question is, if the bill is enacted, will it stand? The answer is, if it is contested and it will be, we will find that the legislation is wanting.

I am hoping that if we ever get to vote in this House on the bill, that members on that side of the House will not sit there numb and dumb. Some of them represent areas populated by first nations and some of them have first nations heavily involved in their constituencies. They have been approached by the first nations and have been educated by them as to their concerns and their needs. Surely those members will stand up and represent the people from their constituencies.

It does not matter whether or not there are first nations in our constituencies. That is not the point. We are talking about developing legislation which will create fairness for the first nations, which will give them the rights they so rightly deserve and which have been taken away from them for so long.

● (1810)

As the member for Matapédia—Matane has just said, they are the people who set the game rules in the beginning. I sit on the fisheries committee with the member for Matapédia—Matane. I come from a fishing community in Newfoundland where we say that we grew up on a boat so the fishery is not new to us. Years ago when fish were plentiful, everyone went out and caught whatever they wanted to catch. They could not care less; the attitude was that it was only fish. Over the last few years we see that we have destroyed a tremendous resource.

During these years in our committee several groups and agencies have come to us. Aggressive harvesters have said that they need more, that the minister is wrong and they need bigger quotas so they can catch more, that they need better equipment, that they need bigger boats so they can catch that last fish. Processors have said that they cannot operate unless they get more product, that unless they are allowed to catch more and more, they will go out of business. They are starting to learn.

However, first nations people have talked about conservation and the environment. They have talked about using what needs to be used while making sure enough is left to sustain the stock and to provide a future for their children and their children's children. For years these wise people and this sound advice was neglected. People said that they were not taking enough and not to worry about them.

It is amazing how we have ignored the advice and experience of people who really know what this earth is all about and how nature operates. We are starting to learn. It is amazing now to hear our own people say what people from first nations and those who are really experienced with making a living from the land have said to us over the years.

What do we do in return when we realize that they are the people who should have the rights that a good bill would bestow? There is Motion No. 26 which gives the minister, acting alone, the right to interfere in band affairs and to require remedial action. What evidence does the minister need? Must reams of evidence be brought to him to say that he should interfere because there is something wrong? No. The minister can interfere if he has a reason to believe that something is wrong. Why can he do it? He uses the old saying that he who pays the piper calls the tune. "We are giving the first nations money, so we must follow it up to make sure they spend it properly and if they step out of line or if someone says they are stepping out of line or even if I as minister think they are stepping out of line, I can go in and exercise my authority as minister". That is what he is saying.

If that is the case, then let me say this. The ministers, through the government, also provide all kinds of money to the provinces and the cities through infrastructure agreements, for instance. Why would the government treat the first nations any differently than it treats the cities and provinces in relation to following the dollar? Is the government now saying that for every dollar it gives, it is going to interfere and if the minister responsible has reason to believe the money is not being spent, is he going to follow through?

● (1815)

In light of what members who sit on the government side see unfolding, in light of the charade that happened in committee, in light of the opposition, and in light of the pleadings of first nations, when they have a chance to vote on the bill, they should think of the people they are supposed to be helping and vote accordingly.

Ms. Wendy Lill (Dartmouth, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to the amendments at report stage of Bill C-7, the first nations governance act.

I wish to recognize the ferocious and passionate work of the member for Winnipeg Centre and the number of hours, days, weeks and nights that he has worked and burned the midnight oil to draw attention to the flaws in the bill, and also to bring some kind of quality to this legislation.

The question remains though, what quality does the bill hold? How can we do justice to the bill or any of the amendments when they are grouped in such a complex and nonsensical fashion, when they have been dumped into the House despite the very eloquent and well reasoned protests of some members from different parties.

We are dealing with a piece of legislation which will fundamentally affect the lives of aboriginal people. The committee had only a matter of hours to look at 40 or 50 amendments. It defies reason. It seems so unfair to expect anyone to decide on whether they can support or not support some of these amendments given the fact that they have had no time to reflect.

I would have to say that the word reflection is not a word that I would in any way use with this disastrous piece of legislation.

I will speak to two of the motions which are in the first grouping. Motion No. 1 was put forward by my colleague from Winnipeg Centre. It reads:

> That Bill C-7, in the Preamble, be amended by replacing lines 15 and 16 on page 1 with the following:
>
> "nance that are in accordance with their individual traditions and customs"

The preamble was amended at committee stage to include reference to effective tools of governance that could be adapted to individual traditions and customs. This change to the preamble would assert that Bill C-7 is intended to provide first nations with effective governing tools that respect their individual traditions and customs, not the other way around.

There has been no attention to first nations values and traditions throughout the entire bill. Some first nations may wish to adopt codes or elect their leaders by following traditional aboriginal methods. However, Bill C-7 would not allow them to do so.

The government's initiative does not address the real challenges faced by aboriginal people: unemployment, insufficient housing, dismal education statistics, inordinately high suicide and infant mortality rates, and the lack of safe drinking water in many places.

Bill C-7 represents the analysis and speculations of non-aboriginal consultants and the wishful thinking of federal bureaucrats. It is not in any way in accordance with the individual traditions and customs of aboriginal people.

I have had the opportunity in the last months to sit on the subcommittee for children at risk. I have been working for the last several months on a study on aboriginal children from ages zero to 12 in the city. It is so clear to me from what I have heard in the committee that the bill does not address the real challenges facing aboriginal people, such as unemployment, fetal alcohol syndrome and such as just incredible poverty that passes through generations, such as the problems inherent in coming out of families which have been crippled by the residential school system, by a system which never allowed families to actually pass on their traditions to their children, never allowed people to know how to be parents, how to relate as parents to their children or their children to parent. It is cutting off at the core the fundamental essence of aboriginal society, which is value for children.

● (1820)

The focus of much of the discussions in that subcommittee was how to overcome the crippling socio-economic conditions facing the first nations people. At the same time, there was such a sense of pride. They are a people who have integrity, strength and richness, and they simply want to work with us. They do not want us to formulate their rules or communities and how they are structured.

One of the main things that I heard from witnesses at the subcommittee was the need for aboriginal-centred support programs. Collectively, aboriginal peoples have led a different life than most Canadians, mostly because of the oppressive treatment by the Canadian government. Time, resources and support are needed to heal. One of the witnesses described it as the "multi-generation grief resulting from colonization". That is the legacy which the government and this society have visited upon native people.

That is why it is so important for culturally relevant programming, and it is also important to realize that one size does not fit all. This bill in fact cannot impose on all native people a method of governing themselves or of being governed. None of the witnesses spoke of government dependency, but rather of partnership and horizontal collaborations to create an integrated policy framework. Things like aboriginal head start programs were good examples of the type of programming needed.

I would like to point out that this bill does not really address any of the needs of aboriginal people who live off reserves, even though this is increasingly the case. The so-called consultation process that this bill undertook did not in any way take into account the aboriginal customs and traditions, and we have heard that over and over. We heard it in committee and we are hearing it now in the House. We also heard it from native groups. The consultation program was fundamentally flawed and insulting to native people. Almost every single organization and individual to appear before the committee strongly denounced the bill, and yet the government continues to force it through Parliament.

The government claims that it consulted over 10,000 people. This includes Internet consultations and 1-800 numbers. However, the first round of the consultation process held in the winter of 2002 had an extremely low turnout at the consultations, and most people who came out to these meetings last year really came out to talk about basic, immediate poverty issues like schools, water and housing. First nations did not want to deal with a massive document that they did not understand. They had come out to talk about bread and butter issues. To say that a widespread consultation occurred on this is a fraud and denigrates the entire process.

The RCAP report, the royal commission on aboriginal people, is a document that native people in this country felt strongly about. It had extensive and legitimate consultations with first nations and experts within their communities and public across the country. It provided a blueprint for a new era of respect and cooperation between the Government of Canada and the first nations people. What happened to those recommendations? Why we are not seeing them as the overlay of the blueprint of this piece of legislation defies reasoning.

I would like to move on to Motion No. 14 which is put forward by the NDP and it reads:

Government Orders

That Bill C-7, in Clause 4, be amended by replacing line 34 on page 4 with the following:

"least 30 days before the vote is conducted"

This is an amendment concerning the issue of the amount of time bands have to make codes available to their band members before adopting them from 15 days to 30 days. The amendment would allow for more time to contact band members living off reserve, but does not make it impossible for bands to adopt codes rapidly in case of emergencies.

● (1825)

In conclusion, when it comes down to imposing it through a specific—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Binet): The member's time has expired. The hon. member for Repentigny.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, like my colleagues, I am pleased to take part in this debate on Bill C-7. At the outset, I wish to commend my hon. colleague from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, who held the fort all the time the government was bulldozing, trying to ram down out throats this bill, which makes a mockery of the very essence of first nations, their values, their integrity and their way of life.

The hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, and others with him, have put in many hours, days, evenings and nights to hold the fort to at the very least minimize the damage. However, after committee stage, we have before us a bill that is a disgrace. As it stands, it is a disgrace. It is a terrible bill for the first nations.

When a bill is put forward, when so-called consultations are held, the basic premise, and it is a clear one, is to try to find a solution to an existing problem.

First, let us consider how a solution can be found to an existing problem. The problem has to be well defined. This requires a comprehensive analysis of the situation and diagnosis.

A situation existed and still exists in the aboriginal community. In principle, the government's intention was to remedy the situation through this bill. There is a governance problem. It has been said repeatedly, it is a fact, the Indian Act dates back to 1867. It was corrected ever so slightly at the time when the Constitution was patriated, but its very essence has its roots in the Constitution Act, 1867. Our communities have evolved and, consequently, the legislation must now be updated. It must better reflect the reality and change the relationship between the federal government and the aboriginal nations. That is what was inherent, implicit in the bill.

To make a diagnosis, to have a clear picture of the situation, it is essential to consult, to observe, to go in the field. If we listen to government members, they will tell us that there has been consultation.

As my colleague from the New Democratic Party was saying a little earlier, 10,000 people were consulted or have answered the questions. But when you use a generic 1-800 line or a website to consult people, we all know that it does not qualify as a scientific or extensive consultation. Those of us who have watched the TV show *Star Academy* know that anybody can push the button many times to vote or give an opinion on a bill. This is not considered as a consultation that strives to address a real and serious problem. It is true that 10,000 people have been consulted, but consulting10,000 people via the Internet or via a 1-800 line does not seem worthy of a consultation held by a national Parliament. If we are going to talk about consultations, we have to be serious.

There were also some consultations during the meetings held in the major cities. Why did we not go where people actually live? No, we met in Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg or Vancouver. We should not only have been meeting there. It is true that we can hear some important representations in those cities, but there is also a reality that we have to see firsthand, where it exists. There were no such consultations.

Asmall cross-country tour was organized, and now they tell us that we have to hurry and pass a bill that is unacceptable for the opposition in general and for first nations communities.

There had already been a previous consultation. It lasted more that six years and cost more than $50 million. It led to the Erasmus-Dussault report.

● (1830)

In this study, why have they not taken into account the information and solutions provided to us by the communities, the aboriginal communities that were really consulted? But no, they decided to shelve it and start all over again, when there had been clear meetings with the community, with the first nations, discussions, decisions, recommendations for a long-term action plan, a clear action plan, a specific action plan with set objectives. But no, back to the drawing board they go, for a new form of governance.

As for consulting people over the Internet and through toll-free numbers, I would be curious to know how many people in the aboriginal community are connected to the Internet, and if these are the ones we want to consult. Why not use another means of consultation? If they have to file between 300 and 350 reports a year —as the Auditor General pointed out in her last report—why not use the same procedure to consult the first nations? Why not have one single, significant and effective report, instead of reports for small communities with a population of 400 or 500? This comes to just about one report a day, and then they talk about consulting the communities over the net in order to find out if what is being proposed is of interest to them, and then these reports just get shelved.

I think that the problem with Bill C-7 has been the lack of desire to achieve a clear diagnosis and the lack of consultation of the populations concerned. As a result, it is like building a house on an unstable foundation. If the foundation is not solid, the rest will not be either. In this case, the foundation of Bill C-7 we have before us is a shaky one from one end to the other; there is nothing good about it. There were no serious consultations, there was no consideration given to previous consultations, to the Erasmus-Dussault report, not to the means and formulas in use for consulting first nations. Now they tell us, "We possess the truth,and we are gong to tell you what is needed to reach a solution".

Are there any agreements with first nations that have been successful? Might what is presented to us today take inspiration from something that has worked? I believe so.

Let us take the case of the agreement signed by the James Bay Cree. Following that agreement, Ovide Mercredi, who was then the chief of the Cree nation, stated that this agreement was really a model to be followed in future agreements between first nations and white people.

Under the agreement signed with the Cree people, they were not granted municipal or local rights, but rather the right to have a true government. It gives the Cree community the right and the capability to manage its own economic development on its territory, that is to manage and develop its own territory; it gives the Cree nation the right to international representation and to a say on its culture, its social affairs and education.

Bill C-7, rather than giving the first nations a true government, gives them the authority granted to municipal or local governments, namely the authority to deal with waste management, and cleanliness in restaurants and in public places.

To show respect to a nation, we must first hold serious consultations with people in order to find out what their needs and aspirations are. After that, we have to listen. We could set up, as has been requested , a joint committee with first nations to come up with a solution. At least we could ensure that, following consultations and discussions, the constructive amendments we want to make are at least considered and not rejected by all the members of the government party.

As has been done before, I once again urge my colleagues on the government side to be open-minded and to make improvements to this bill, or at least to set it aside and hold real consultations with the nations concerned before passing it.

● (1835)

[*English*]

Mr. Andy Burton (Skeena, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, today we are dealing with Bill C-7 at report stage and second reading in a combined format, as the House gave its consent last year to send the bill directly to committee after first reading. I know from the Canadian Alliance perspective this was agreed to in order to ensure a detailed review of the bill in committee to hopefully result in many needed changes to the original format.

I understand from our party representatives on the aboriginal affairs and northern development committee that the extensive travel, the many witnesses and their detailed testimony have proven to be a strong representation of how the legislative process should work, particularly when dealing with such sweeping changes as are proposed in the bill.

I would also like the House to know that I am particularly pleased that the committee agreed to travel to my riding of Skeena. I would like to thank Mary Dalen, Roberta Van Doorn and Theresa Wesley for appearing as individuals. I would like to thank Mr. Gerald Wesley of the Northwest Tribal Treaty Nations, Mr. Robert H. Hill of the Tsimshian Tribal Council, as well as Mr. Clarence Nyce and his team from the Skeena Native Development Society for taking the time to appear as witnesses representing groups.

I truly believe that it is only through open and honest discussion on ways to improve legislation that we will ever effect positive change for Canadians and, in this case in particular, for aboriginal Canadians.

For the benefit of those Canadians watching the debate, I would like to take a moment to summarize the intent of Bill C-7 before I speak to the specifics of the grouping before the House today.

The first nations governance act attempts to address three areas: leadership selection, financial and governance administration. As opposed to popular perception, the bill will not improve much needed governance problems on Canadian reserves.

Bill C-7 would, however, increase the powers of chiefs and councils to appoint their own police force and redress officers, create a two tier human rights regime in Canada, cost taxpayers millions of dollars and do very little to address the inequities that exist between aboriginal and non-aboriginal Canadians.

I believe the first nations governance act is another example of a Liberal top down, expensive failure. The federal government ignores the fact that good governance can only begin with empowered and equal individuals who will hold their elected officials to account. Bill C-7 instead concentrates power in the hands of a few and further pushes first nations members to the margins of Canadian society.

There are a number of problems with the bill and some are as follows.

The first nations governance act would further exacerbate the power imbalance between governing band elites and marginalized band members.

Good governance can only be achieved by empowering the individual rights, freedoms and responsibilities of members so they will hold their leaders accountable.

Enforcement officers would be appointed by chiefs and would have broad search and seizure powers and powers to levy fines. These officers would be answerable only to chief and council.

Chiefs would be able to appoint their own mini-me ombudsman, similar to the Prime Minister's totally ineffective ethics counsellor.

Aboriginal Canadians would continue to be denied human rights protection under the Canadian Human Rights Act. The government has provided a collective defence for band councils to trump individual rights and protections. Bill C-7 would create a two tier human rights system in Canada.

The bill threatens the security of an already precarious group in Canadian society. Change for the sake of change will only lead to future problems.

This is the most expensive and least effective model of governance ever proposed. There would be 600 different financial codes, possibly 600 mini-me ombudsman and possibly 600 band enforcement officers created as a result of the bill.

The Auditor General has said that the government should provide a complete cost analysis for the bill but it has not.

The Canadian Alliance believes that the Indian Act is archaic and should be left in our past. Sustainable aboriginal governance solutions are attainable and are in every Canadian's best interest.

The Canadian Alliance believes in equality driven governance and that empowered individuals are the best means to ensure accountability.

Future legislative initiatives must focus on removing barriers, restoring equality and empowering individual aboriginal Canadians to determine the direction of their government.

All Canadians should enjoy the equal protections of the Canadian Human Rights Act, but section 67 of the act exempts first nations governments. Therefore first nations members cannot seek redress or file complaints with the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal. The Canadian Alliance supports the full and equal protection and benefits of the Canadian Human Rights Act for aboriginal Canadians.

● (1840)

Aboriginal Canadians should have the same economic choices and opportunities as non-aboriginal Canadians. Barriers in the Indian Act prevent the equal economic participation among aboriginal Canadians. The Canadian Alliance supports the removal of the personal property protections for mortgage, seizure and levy that are in the Indian Act. Removing these protections would enable aboriginal Canadians to obtain long term financing.

Neither the Indian Act, the first nations governance act nor the First Nations Land Management Act adequately address the issue of matrimonial property. If there is a breakdown of a marriage on the reserve, provincial and territorial laws regarding the use, occupancy and possession of land, as well as a division of interests in that land, are not applicable. Due to this legislation gap, interests in matrimonial real property are not always divided fairly, equitably or in a timely fashion. The Canadian Alliance submitted amendments at both committee stage and report stage to address this issue but unfortunately unsuccessfully.

To promote economic opportunity and individual freedom, the Canadian Alliance supports initiatives that extend and enhance property ownership in aboriginal communities. Some reserve communities have innovatively used the certificate of possession program to enhance individual property ownership. These communities have witnessed a reduction in property crime and vandalism, resulting in better property maintenance and longer housing life. The Canadian Alliance will work with first nations communities to create an environment that gives individuals the opportunity and responsibility for home ownership.

The first step to achieving good governance is equal and empowered individuals. The FNGA fails to recognize the importance of individuals in creating accountable governance. It does not address the rights, freedoms, protections or responsibilities of community members and instead focuses upon the powers of the chief and council.

The Canadian Alliance agrees that change must happen in first nations communities but it must be the right kind of change if it is to be sustainable and successful.

As far as an ombudsman goes, many individuals feel there is no check on the power of chiefs and council and would like to see an independent, impartial body available for complaints of a local nature. An ombudsman's office would deter many abuses of power, since leaders would know that members could appeal to the ombudsman for ruling.

The Liberal approach to redress forces individuals to endure a marathon of hearings and appeal processes. There would be three stages in seeking redress for a complaint. First, band councils may write into their codes an appeal process that individuals can use. What that looks like will depend on the band council code.

Second, if someone's complaint is not dealt with to their satisfaction using the first avenue, the person can go to the person or body appointed by each band to hear complaints. Section 11 of the bill provides for this. That means there could potentially be over 600 complaint bodies among first nations in Canada.

The third and last stage of the redress process involves a national ombudsman. This third stage has been added by the Liberals only now at report stage.

The process is too cumbersome. It will take a long time for any redress to be won. People will give up because of the lengthy process.

The first of the two stages in the Liberal approach will not be truly independent. Redress mechanisms within the band will be open to bias. The committee heard from many witnesses that the ability of a local ombudsman to remain independent and impartial is severely restricted and almost impossible in smaller communities.

The Canadian Alliance has led the way in consistently calling for a single national ombudsman for aboriginal people.

The Liberals at report stage are adding a national ombudsman to the bill but they are robbing the office of effectiveness by not guaranteeing confidentiality to complainants. Their version of the ombudsman would allow the report to Parliament to contain information that might disclose details of a complaint. Newspapers that picked up on this report would be shielded from libel and slander laws. In essence, an aboriginal person cannot be sure that his or her concern would be kept confidential by the ombudsman. This would open the complainant to retribution and persecution. As a result, people will not want to use the ombudsman for redress, which means that the one potentially independent form of redress available to aboriginal persons will be off limits to many.

I will conclude by saying that Canada is at a crossroads. Our path leads us to equality and inclusiveness. The Liberal's path entrenches difference, subordinates individuals to collectivities and forever disengages aboriginals from the rest of Canada. The first nations governance act is one step closer to a third order of government, which our policies do not support, therefore we must reject the act.

I would like to finish by quoting from the testimony of one of my first nations constituents, Mrs. Mary Dalen, at the Prince Rupert committee meeting on February 20 of this year, when speaking about the overall problem with the current system, all the while explaining that the new FNGA is not fixing the fundamental problem. She said:

> —the money or funding for programs does not get down to the grassroots Indian people.

I wholeheartedly agree and would suggest that she hit the nail on the head.

● (1845)

We in the Canadian Alliance have suggested many amendments to the bill, both in committee and at report stage, and unless those amendments are incorporated in this bill, we will be opposing the passage of this legislation.

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to begin by objecting in the strongest possible terms to the process with which we are dealing with this bill, up to and including today. I have 10 minutes to address over 12 amendments that have been grouped together. Many of those amendments I have only seen for the first time short hours ago.

For the record, this entire process of dealing with Bill C-7 has been a sham from the beginning, from the consultation process to the government ramming the bill through the committee stage. Now we find ourselves at the report stage in the House of Commons without adequate time to either prepare or consult with first nations or do justice to the many serious issues that the bill faces, as it pertains to the lives of first nations and the way they conduct their affairs in their communities. It is completely inadequate.

However I am not going to waste what few moments I am allocated on that any longer. Suffice it say, and by way of introduction, Canada's treatment of first nations is this country's greatest failure and surely this country's greatest shame. I believe firmly in my heart that the emancipation of aboriginal people is the great civil rights challenge of our time, and the House of Commons should be giving it the attention that it deserves. It is only once in a generation that a government seems to find the political will to address the terrible shortcomings in the relationship between the federal government and first nations.

Imagine the optimism on the part of first nations when it was suggested that the Indian Act would be abolished and then the profound disappointment when the contents of the bill became known. Profound disappointment was on the faces of the many first nations witnesses who came before the standing committee. They implored the government to listen and to pay attention to their issues and to implement the recommendations they were bringing forward instead of tinkering with the Indian Act, an outdated colonial instrument of oppression, which is what the Indian Act is. It is an instrument of oppression that has been responsible for 130 years of social tragedy. We finally had an opportunity to deal with that bill.

Rather than deal with the Indian Act, do away with it and recognize and acknowledge the inherent right to self-government of aboriginal people, the minister has brought forward measures which tinker with the administrative details of micromanaging in an even more paternalistic way, the most minute details of how first nations govern themselves.

We have to start by addressing some of the misinformation surrounding this. First is the name. It is called the first nations governance act. It is the most incredible misnomer that I have encountered since I have been in Ottawa. We moved an amendment in fact at committee to rename it the "first nations micromanagement act" because that is what it seeks to do. Rather than diminish or reduce the discretionary authority of the minister, it expands the authority of the minister to interfere with the lives of first nations. It has nothing to do with self-governance because it contradicts the very idea of self-governance to impose codes of government on people who have made it abundantly clear that they will not accept them. That is colonialism and nothing else.

The only thing that we need to know in this chamber is that first nations from coast to coast are overwhelmingly opposed to the bill. It would be the height of colonial arrogance for a bunch of white men in suits, with my apologies to the white women in suits who are also here, a bunch of non-aboriginal people to put in place the very rules by which first nations shall be mandated to govern themselves. It is so fundamentally wrong that I ask everyone here to reflect for a moment on what is so tragically wrong with this picture.

● (1850)

I was very pleased to hear the intervention by the right hon. member for Calgary Centre. He hearkened back to a time when there was a more sincere approach taken toward addressing the terrible shortcomings in our relationship with first nations, and that was most recently in and around the time of the Charlottetown accord.

I was honoured to take part in those five ordinary Canadian sessions they had. I also was invited to attend the aboriginal round of the Charlottetown accord. At that time, I saw the former prime minister, the current right hon. member for Calgary Centre, have almost daily meetings with the National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, Ovide Mercredi. I recently thought what an incredible contrast this was, where the current Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development refused to talk to the legitimately elected leadership of first nations in the country.

In fact when the legitimately elected leadership of the first nations opposed Bill C-7, or did not jump onboard the bandwagon, he deliberately circumvented them, bypassed them and refused to deal with them. He claimed he would talk directly to the grassroots. He also claimed there was overwhelming desire to implement the administrative tinkering details; that is the first nations governance act.

It is absolutely fundamentally false that there is support for this bill. In fact the government itself could not find anybody who supported this bill unless it bought and paid for them. In other words, it created brand new aboriginal associations and organizations and co-opted them into it because the legitimate and long-established aboriginal organizations did not want anything to do with it. That is how cynical this whole process has become.

I will not get a chance to address this group of amendments, even though many of them were put forward by the NDP which sincerely wanted to address them. However within 10 minutes I cannot even introduce the subject with which we are dealing. I cannot even give it a proper preface, never mind truly consult with first nations to see if they are in support of these amendments and then bring their opinions and views back to the House of Commons. It is impossible and the government knows it is impossible. It is impossible by design because it is the way the government wanted it.

Members can sense the frustration I feel. I have been trying to faithfully represent some of the input which we have had from first nations people all through this process. Let me quote one of the presenters. I should point out there were 191 presenters opposed and 10 presenters who spoke in a qualified way in support. Those were the numbers of witnesses we heard at the committee.

One of those witnesses from the Keeseekoowenin Ojibway First Nation, Treaty No. 2 of the Riding Mountain Band, stated:

> It is simultaneously obscene, ridiculous, and totally unacceptable that at the dawn of the 21st century we would have to be here as supplicants, defending ourselves from colonialism. It is obscene that our children would have to witness us having to protect ourselves in this way, that they will have to live their lives as we have, knowing that they must constantly have to be on the defensive, alert for impositions, and that our elders would be subject to this indignity.

That is one of the profound comments we heard from first nations across the country, and the government is turning a deaf ear to these very real and honest concerns.

It is a missed opportunity of the most tragic epic proportions because we have it in our opportunity to do something about Canada's greatest chain. Instead, we are forfeiting it in favour of more administrative tinkering and more interference in the lives of first nations who have an inherent right to self-determination. It is a travesty.

● (1855)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to pick up where my colleague left off. I would like to commend him for the work he did in committee before, of course, paying a very sincere tribute to my colleague, the member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot. He has done remarkable work on this committee, as did the other members.

I must say that I find it sad that this debate is not only following this so-called process, but following it in such a fashion. What is at stake here is infinitely greater than the restrictive formula being imposed on us. The reality of the situation, for me, is that the main problem is that we are dealing with a bad bill. We should not be dealing with this kind of bill. What we should be dealing with is the fact that the legislation this bill amends—but leaves virtually intact—the infamous Indian Act, is what the government should have focused on from the time it was elected. It should have acted by building on what the previous government had started to do, which was to get rid of the Indian Act and give the first nations of this country the real means to develop as the citizens they have the right to be, and which they cannot be right now. They cannot be this type of citizen, not because they do not want to, but because they have not been given the general conditions to allow for it.

What we should have been doing was fixing the Indian Act. What did the government do instead? After nearly ten years in power, they came up with a bill that is, first of all, very complicated to understand. I attended the committee to help my colleague for a few hours, and I read the bill. I am very happy to have done so, because I cannot believe it. It makes no sense that this type of text is what outlines how governance will be handled.

I would even say, at first glance, that it cannot be enforced. The bill is so botched that it does not achieve the objectives it sets out.

I would like to take this brief opportunity to remind the House—I was a history teacher—that, when the French first arrived on the St. Lawrence River and met the first nations, particularly when they decided to stay for the winter, who taught the others how to dress, to eat, to drink and to survive? It was not the French, with their muskets. It was the natives, those they met at that time and who, with their longstanding culture, their wisdom, their knowledge, their ways of life that were extremely respectable and different, depending on the nations, came to meet the white people and told them what they could do. The first time, the white people did not ask them and they almost all died of scurvy. But later, they learned that they could get rid of scurvy by boiling loblolly pine needles. It was later discovered that they contained ascorbic acid. This is one of the examples.

I would like to tell the House about another event that stuns me when I think about the relationship with the first nations. I think about the great peace of Montreal of 1701. Of course, I am talking about Quebec, which is normal. This great peace of Montreal allowed the French to continue to almost dominate the continent, despite their very small population in the St. Lawrence Valley. They achieved this peace, the only great peace ever achieved in America with the natives. This was the great peace of Montreal.

● (1900)

What I want to say is that one moment really struck me; it was during the last part of the negotiations, between the governor and the representative of the aboriginal people, Kondiaronk. Everyone who saw and heard him described him as a philosopher, a diplomat, a remarkable politician, who debated as an equal with the governor. Kondiaronk, after all the necessary discussions, achieved this peace with the various nations.

The first nations, the leaders, the mayors, the clan mothers in some, were persons of culture and learning. They were admirable people, as in all peoples. I want to say that clearly. And then one reads the Indian Act, one sees what this government has come up with after all these years, after the promise made in 1982. Let me just say a word about Pierre Elliott Trudeau and, for once, it will not be to criticize him, even though he tried to ram the Constitution down our throats, in Quebec—the whole National Assembly was against that—but for the aboriginal people, it constituted recognition of their inherent rights. And some have been able to use the instruments given to them at that time before the courts.

This created so much hope that in Quebec René Lévesque, who had initiated a process with first nations, was told, "No, we would rather go with the federal government to see this through". He admitted it. Beside, although he had decided with the National Assembly not to take part in federal-provincial meetings, he always ensured a presence when aboriginal people were involved.

In 1985, he took action. At that time, I had a brief stay in his cabinet. He knew that he was going to leave soon after. He took action. He introduced the motion to have the National Assembly recognize the ten first nations and the Inuit nation.

I want to use the word pride. How can we hope that first nations will regain that pride in their development? Today, for their young people, how can we hope for it when we have before us a bill so utterly incapable of showing the way and of fostering quick action?

The Dussault-Erasmus report was extraordinary. Why has it been shelved? Why is the first result of the recognition of inherent rights in 1982 this ill-conceived bill that cannot even meet the objectives we think it is pursuing.

It is very sad. Perhaps because I am a Quebecer, a sovereignist, I feel this a lot more strongly, but I will repeat what others have said. This is a missed opportunity. This is serious, for a rich country like Canada, a country that has not experienced the problems others have, a country that boasts all over the world of its great achievements on human rights. This is a disgrace. It is not good enough.

● (1905)

[*English*]

Mr. Rex Barnes (Gander—Grand Falls, PC): Madam Speaker, when I sit in the House as I did yesterday and listen to speaker after speaker, it is sometimes amazing to hear what members say.

I noticed that 104 amendments were submitted on Bill C-7. Probably a half or a little more than half of them will be accepted. It is like the transportation committee, with 175 or 180 amendments. If there are that many amendments to a bill submitted, the bill should basically be scrapped and started over. Basically this bill loses its whole intent, its purpose of trying to bring in good legislation for our first nations. With so many amendments, how can we trust the government to make sure that the intent of the bill is what the bill will do? When we have so many amendments and when we have it being rushed through, we on this side of the House know that the bill is not going to be for the good intentions of first nations.

As for the reasons for this, the real problems of first nations have to do with many things. Of course we hear from day to day in the media that the first nations peoples are struggling with poverty, their suicide levels are higher than the Canadian average, and they struggle with discrimination, illness and despair. These are the things that the government and we as parliamentarians should be making priorities for the first nations groups.

Instead, all the government wants to do is to control them. I do not think anyone wants to be controlled. We see throughout the country, in Newfoundland and Labrador, Ontario, Quebec, Alberta and other provinces, that provinces are fed up with the interference of the federal government in the provinces being able to run their own affairs, and all this bill is doing is interfering in the rights of first nations people to govern themselves.

How could the government expect any less from the first nations than it would from any people? The first nations are their own people. They have the right to make decisions, good, bad or indifferent, and they have the right to build their own nations to their own liking and for their own people, because they are the ones who understand their people. They know what is best for their people.

The right hon. member for Calgary Centre is one of the members in the House who is most experienced in dealing with first nations concerns. He has been there. He understands. When the right hon. member stands up and says there is something wrong with Bill C-7, I think we need to take a serious look at it and say that there really must be something wrong, because the right hon. gentleman would not say things if they were not true, or maybe they are intended for the wrong reason, and I apologize if I am saying that there are falsehoods, Madam Speaker, but the thing about it is that first nations people have a right to govern themselves for their people and of course this bill does not do that for them.

First, with any government trying to have self-government for its people, no matter if it is a province, a band council or what it is, what we will find is that there are going to be growing pains. There will be problems and people will sometimes do things that they should not, but we do not just decide to say that we are going in to take them over. They have to learn from their mistakes.

We have to be with them to help them go through the challenges they face and be there for support, but we should not be there as the Government of Canada to impose things on them for the sake of imposing them. That then becomes a controlling of power, and as parliamentarians we should not stand for that. It is important to let the first nations people grow themselves so they will become superior in their own right, so they can govern themselves for their people.

Second, Bill C-7 will not work. Constitutional experts say many of the provisions of the bill will be thrown out, and if they are not, they are going to require the cooperation of the first nations people themselves and we know the first nations oppose this fiercely. They will not cooperate. There is a reason, I feel, why they will not cooperate. Why would they cooperate when they know that Ottawa is meddling in their affairs? It goes back to letting them govern themselves for the right reasons and for their own people, because they know their own people.

● (1910)

In Newfoundland and Labrador, the Conne River Indian Band Council has self-governance and does a tremendous job of taking care of its people's needs. The government assists them with money. The band has its own council and power of governance for its own people. It is working out extremely well with no interference from government. If members have a problem they work it out through cooperation. They sit down like any government would do and work out their own problems for their own people, and we should be doing the same thing here.

In my riding there are two area band councils. They have put a lot into society. They keep their heritage alive, but they do it in their own way without interference. That result shows us that there should be no government interference. As I said before, we should be there to assist them to move forward so they can direct their own problems in their own way and in a professional manner.

Third, this bill pretends to give the first nations more power. The government seems to think that by doing certain things they can have their own say for their own people, but instead it is all about power for Ottawa. Everything is to be centrally located, with a power base in Ontario, all in the main hub of the country.

But as we know, first nations people do not have the power to take care of their own needs and Ottawa should stop meddling. Ottawa should give them the right to deliver their own programs. There should be assistance from Canada, but it should let them do their own thing for their own people so that first nations people can have pride in what they are doing.

One of the government amendments gives the government the power to interfere in band affairs without evidence. All the minister needs is a reason to believe something is wrong. The bill gives the minister the power to force band councils to change. There is no judge and there is no jury, just raw power from Ottawa. That is not democracy. Where are we living? We are living in a democratic society where people make decisions and choices and, as a result, they move forward from the decisions they make, good, bad or indifferent, but they have the power to make their own decisions. For government to jump in on a minute's notice because it feels there is a problem is wrong. Let the people decide themselves. If something is happening, let them decide.

Fourth, the bill was steamrollered through the committee, which was shameful. The government, once it gets something in its claw, seems to just move forward. The overwhelming majority of first nations witnesses strongly opposed it, as was said earlier by the hon. member, and there was no time given to prepare amendments. It seems like we can go to committee and present true facts, figures and statements, but no one is listening. I do not know why.

We are elected to serve the people and elected to serve the people in a manner that is right for the people. People come to us as members and tell us their problems, but for some reason or another members do not listen. I do not know why members on the other side are not listening. Sometimes a person has to use his head instead of going with the norm and sometimes a person has to say, "There is something wrong with this and we have to change it". Instead, those members will just vote in the normal way and as a result we will have chaos in the first nations communities.

There is an old saying back home: if you meddle too much in the kitchen with your finger, eventually something is going to happen to your finger. I guarantee members this. The first nations people have made it quite clear that the bill is unacceptable, and if the country wants demonstration after demonstration, the first nations people are not going to put up with what the government is doing, and they are going to rally the people behind them to protest like we have never seen before in the country. We have seen it happen to fishermen in Newfoundland and Labrador. We have seen it happen with fishermen in New Brunswick. I can guarantee right now that the first nations people will not stand idly by and let the government do things to their councils that will have a major effect on their people.

We need to have cooperation. The only way to have cooperation is to let the first nations people do things their way because they know best. If we interfere, then of course we are just as bad as any other government, because we would be imposing our will on a minority group of people for no reason at all.

Let the first nations people do the things they like their way. When they do it their way, the people they represent will come to respect them and will have pride in what they do. If they do not have pride, then of course when it comes to election time they will get rid of that group of people and put in people who are going to work for their people, and they will know that they have the best representation of all.

● (1915)

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have been sitting here listening to the debate on Bill C-7, the first nations governance act, and I have been thinking about what our role is as members of Parliament. Our role is to create legislation. We actually create our own rules in terms of how we govern ourselves. I have been sitting here tonight thinking how we parliamentarians would feel if another body, divorced and separate from us, had the power to create the rules under which we govern ourselves.

We should remember that the British North America Act was repatriated to Canada and the Canadian Constitution was made here in Canada. It was a very significant day historically for Canada because it was something that was made in our country by our governing body. There is a very important parallel to be drawn here. Tonight we are witnessing a very sad day in Canada's history. We are debating a bill which basically will dictate how first nations shall govern themselves in this country. I really believe that I do not have the right to do that and I do not believe that the Government of Canada has the right to do that.

I along with many other members in the House participated in some of the committee hearings. What struck me about the committee hearings and going through the bill clause by clause, and the 200 or so amendments that the committee went through, was how incredibly prescriptive the bill is.

If the government is true to its word that this bill is somehow about liberating and freeing first nations to take their rightful place in Canadian society and to govern themselves, we only have to look at the bill to think otherwise. Every single little thing has been spelled out, such as fines, and who is appointed to what, and what can and cannot be done. It is the kind of legislation we would have expected 100 years ago.

If we are being led to believe that somehow this is bringing us into the modern age, and it is bringing first nations into the modern age in terms of self-governance, I really am quite stunned. What we actually see in the bill, which is so prescriptive and patronizing, is a far cry from the political rhetoric we have heard from the government.

I want to pay tribute to our member for Winnipeg Centre along with other members of the committee. They have done an incredibly heroic job in trying to expose the fundamental flaws in the bill. Night after night the committee sat through the night. I see other committee members are here. They spoke on and on. Many members from first nations communities also came to the committee to witness what was going on. All they could do was bear witness, because they could not speak at that point. They could not say anything about the very thing that was being done to them by Parliament, by the government.

I want to pay tribute to the incredible work that was done by the opposition members in the committee. They used every single thing they could think of in a parliamentary sense to show their utter contempt for the bill.

Now we are being forced to do that in this chamber as well. We are quite frank about it. We will do everything we can to hold up this bill and to see that it does not go through, because of the very strong message that has come from across the country from first nations communities. They believe that this bill is something which cannot be imposed upon them. The bill is describing a system of governance which in many ways is completely contrary to what has been the practice in first nations communities.

I am proud to be one of the many members of the opposition who are standing up to Bill C-7. We are saying shame on the federal government for what clearly is its intent to ram this piece of legislation through before the House recesses in the middle of June.

Another thing that strikes me about Bill C-7 is the huge issue in terms of form and substance. One thing I have learned over the years is that when somebody does not want to deal with substance, it is very easy for him or her to deal with the issue of form or structure. That is really what this bill is about.

● (1920)

I represent the urban riding of Vancouver East. I represent a community that includes the downtown east side which probably has among the highest residency levels of urban aboriginal people, people who have come off reserve. We should be looking at issues of substance and actually devoting to them the same kind of time, energy and resources that have gone into this horrible bill. If we devoted even 10% of that energy and government resources into the real substantive issues that are facing first nations and aboriginal people in this country, then we would be doing our job and the government would be doing its job.

I feel absolutely sick to my stomach when I see young aboriginal women living on the street, destitute, involved in the sex trade. I feel sick that 63 women have been murdered in the downtown east side. I feel sick when I see young people who have been forced into a life of complete destitution and drug use. I feel sick when I see the misery and the desperation that takes place in that neighbourhood. I feel sick when I see the pathetic response from the government with all of its press releases, with all of the agreements that supposedly are there are and still there are people who are dying on the streets.

Aboriginal people are dying on the streets in the downtown east side and in other communities. My colleague from Winnipeg Centre faces a similar situation in what is happening to first nations people in his neighbourhood. That is the reality of what is happening to aboriginal people.

The government should be making it a priority to focus on those issues. It should be looking at homelessness and making sure that there is adequate, well-maintained, safe, appropriate, affordable housing. It should be making sure that there are adequate treatment programs for people with addictions. It should be making sure that there are programs to help people exit from the sex trade. Those are the kinds of issues we should be dealing with in the House.

The committee should be dealing with these issues instead of having to spend, as the hon. member said, 55 days and 55 nights of merry-go-round hearings. Everyone but the government could see the writing on the wall that the bill was completely unacceptable.

I want to register my deep concern and indignation that we are now debating the bill in 10-minute segments. We never had a proper second reading debate of the bill. I raised this earlier today. Even within our own little parliamentary world and the rules that we live by, we have completely violated the regular procedures that we go through for dealing with legislation.

Because the bill was considered to be of such magnitude and scope, it was referred to the committee to have a broad discussion. In effect we bypassed second reading stage. The bill is now at report stage which is the stage when the House usually would deal with amendments. As the member from the Conservative Party pointed out, there are some 107 report stage amendments. There were 200 or so amendments that were already dealt with and disposed of in the committee. Here we are at report stage and we have not yet properly debated the bill in principle.

Not only is it a travesty from the point of view of parliamentary procedure, it is also a total failure from the point of view of living up to what I believe are the legitimate expectations that first nations people have about their own governance and about their own expectations for their communities.

This is probably a done deal but I want to end by saying that we on this side of the House will use everything we can dream up, every procedural trick we can think of to try to stop the bill from going through. We feel so strongly that it is a flawed piece of legislation that it should be stopped and it should be sent back. We will continue until the very last moment to try to stop the bill.

● (1925)

Mr. Charles Hubbard (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like members opposite to listen very carefully because I want to speak about the codes which are a very significant part of the bill.

As we crossed the country and listened to various first nations people, many of them said that codes already existed which were as good, if not better, than what the bill proposed. The government proposed this with Motion No. 89. Madam Speaker, I ask that you seek the unanimous consent of the House that we be allowed to bring this in as part of our legislation. It was denied by the Speaker. It certainly would be relevant to our first nations people to recognize the significance of the fact that they already have suitable codes in existence.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): Does the member have the unanimous consent of the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Saskatoon—Wanuskewin, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, we have had an interesting run over a number of weeks and this has been no doubt recounted over the course of the speeches thus far. We started this cross-country caravan in every province across Canada. We had video conferencing from some of the territories. We heard some interesting testimony. A lot of it was coming at us from the same point of view. The point was clearly made that there was strong opposition throughout the country to the first nations governance initiative as we have it in Bill C-7.

I guess in fairness we should say there were individuals who said there were aspects of the bill that they thought might be a good thing for the country, but there were definitely problems. As we approach any bill, we want to look at ways to either salvage it, improve it or have it in a form that is helpful to the people it is intended to be of help to. I do not think anyone would disagree in the House and certainly not in first nations territory across our country that changes are necessary. No one is denying that.

In fact, the Indian Act is pretty much universally acclaimed as being a problem. It is outdated and needs to be changed. We need to have discussions and exchanges to make changes to the Indian Act in order to bring it up to date and modernize it. This would allow first nations people across our country to do well, succeed and have all the other rights and opportunities that other Canadians assume and take for granted.

The process was flawed from the very beginning for a couple of reasons. There were individuals who were supposed to be heard across the country. However it was done over a period of time where a real big percentage of individuals did not come forward because in some cases their leaders had indicated to them they did not think it merited support, so they just did not become engaged in the process.

In other cases it was more of an information sharing at suppers and so on across the country. Those numbers were counted up as those who were engaged in the process when in fact they were there for a meal. They watched a video and shared information. It was certainly not a two way dialogue.

Out of that process we got back to this place, the House of Commons, and had committee work done over a period of weeks. It dragged on and on, as everyone knows, because of the strong objections of different people. The committee members were not particularly enamoured with the piece of legislation. We had late nights: 9 p.m. to 12 a.m., 9 p.m. to 1:30 a.m., and 9 p.m. to 4:30 a.m. The last couple of days we sat from 9 p.m. until 11 a.m. the next day.

In my short six years of being a member of Parliament—and I thought it was just because I had not been around the block long enough and that this was a pretty common occurrence—I am told by a third term member of Parliament that this is only the second time this kind of long, protracted and drawn out process has occurred.

There are a lot of myths surrounding the first nations governance initiative. Certainly the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development has contributed in part to some of the myths that have grown up in respect to this piece of legislation. He stated that the FNGA would provide aboriginal Canadians with "real measures to seek redress and to hold their governments accountable".

As I look at it, there are no serious foundational changes in this particular bill that need to occur. In fact, it seems to be in many respects formalizing some failed accountability practices of the past. We were told repeatedly or at least on a number of occasions that bands currently complete 168 reports a year. I am not of the view that more forms or more paperwork will necessarily enhance the accountability if it is not the right kind of reporting and done in the manner that is going to be of most help to first nations people so that they can press accountability on their reserves.

Accountability can only occur if individuals are empowered with the rights and freedoms to hold their governments accountable. It comes from the bottom up and it has to be there. The tools and mechanisms must be given to individuals.

● (1930)

It is not an imposition from above, but we must begin with the people. There needs to be a buy-in and ownership. Over the course of time as they own the process and these mechanisms and so on, then we can get true accountability.

The only redress mechanism available to reserve residents is a band and chief appointed ombudsman or redress officer. Some have called it a "mini-me" ombudsman, kind of like the Prime Minister's ethics counsellor. If I were a chief or a band council member, I am not so sure that I would even want the kind of local ombudsman appointed by myself and my other colleagues on a council. If there was ever an issue and somebody said there was a problem with something which I had done even when I was quite clean on the matter, and I was the individual who had appointed that particular redress officer, I am not sure that even if there was a clearing of my name, a clearing of me as a chief or a councillor, that there would be that perception that things had been done right because I was the individual who hand-picked or appointed that person.

We have reserves across our country and bands that are as small as a couple of dozen people, and many that are in the range of 100 or 200 people, all related by family. I do not really know that we would have the perception of impartiality and evenhandedness if a chief and council were to appoint a local ombudsman of that sort. We obviously have a problem with that.

People who are often beaten down with life and are not easily able to get through in terms of having their issues addressed would have to go to their chief and council. If that does not resolve it, then they would have to go from there to the local redress officer, the ombudsman on the reserve appointed by chief and council. If they have the guts and the gusto, and they push to get through that level and it is not adequately addressed there, then they would have to go on to a national ombudsman. We think there are too many layers and tiers. Justice will be greatly delayed if people persist to get through. As a result we will not have proper redress.

The minister said that the bill would help to build a strong foundation for a first nations economy. Many economists would strongly disagree with the minister because there are continuing barriers in the Indian Act that have prevented economic growth and those would remain. Those are not dealt with or done away with in Bill C-7. For example, aboriginal Canadians would still not be able to mortgage their homes and secure credit or financing.

I had the privilege to talk to a first nations entrepreneur who is an aggressive businessman. He is assertive. He employs other first nations people. He was lamenting to me a couple of days back about the situation on his reserve. It concerned the issue over control of the resources by chief and council. He has a certificate of possession for his home and he has a store right on the edge of the reserve, but there is still the issue of the certificate of possession. He can only sell it to somebody there. It does not have true market value. It is determined by others, the chief of the band and the council, as to what kind of business comes his way. He is a contractor as well. This is a first nations person who is lamenting the difficulties and that things are not greatly changing with this particular bill.

I see that my time is about to expire. I have much to say and I will do so at future stages of the bill. I appreciate the opportunity to initially indicate our concerns, our distress, and our opposition to the bill as it comes before us, even in view of the amendments. We do not believe it mitigates nor will it be of real help to first nations people across our country.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

● (1935)

[*English*]

TRADE

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Carleton, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, last month I rose in the House to ask a very important question on the subject of cross-border trade with the United States. More particularly, I asked about the effects that a possible requirement for 24 hour notice before crossing the border would have on such sectors as the auto sector. The answer that I received from the minister was unsatisfactory and so here I am this evening, in search of a more thoughtful response.

Given recent events in our country's agricultural sector, I would like to shift my focus slightly to another even more troubling new barrier to trade and to examine the effects that the closing of the Canada-U.S. border to Canadian beef as a result of the BSE scare are starting to have on this important industry.

We all understand the ripple effects that occur when unanticipated trade restraints are imposed on important export industries. If the borders with the United States, our most important trading partner, are to be closed to Canadian beef, this will have widespread implications throughout our economy. And contrary to what the urban focused Liberal government might think, this is not a problem that will affect only the rural west.

Although it is true that Canada's one and only confirmed case of BSE took place in Alberta, beef farming is a crucial part of the rural economy right here in eastern Ontario. In the rural parts of the amalgamated city of Ottawa, beef farms are the most numerous type of farm enterprise. In Ottawa, nearly 600 businesses serve these operations, thereby creating over 3,500 jobs. Similarly, in Lanark and Renfrew counties, nearly 9% of all jobs are tied to the agriculture sector and over $240 million is generated every year by

businesses that buy from and sell to farms. In the Ottawa Valley, even more than in Ottawa itself, beef farms greatly outnumber any other type of farm. Therefore, the effects of a prolonged closure of the U.S. border to Canadian beef could be particularly devastating to rural eastern Ontario.

It is not just farmers who are being hurt. It is the truck drivers who would have taken cattle to market. It is the people who find their employment at the local sale barn, where sales volumes are down dramatically. It is all the people in the agricultural support industries to whom the government is showing spectacular insensitivity.

Eastern Ontario is a part of the country in which the government has repeatedly failed to provide adequate staffing and services at its employment insurance offices. The result is that it is constantly missing its service targets in terms of waiting periods for temporarily unemployed workers who need access, often for the very first time in their lives, to the employment insurance system to which they have faithfully contributed for years.

Now the government seems intent on refusing to accept reduced waiting periods for workers who have been temporarily deprived of employment due to the closing of the border to beef.

This seems astonishing to me given that we saw the government spring to attention and take rapid action to provide temporary special relief under the employment insurance system to Torontonians who lost their jobs as the result of the SARS outbreak. Yet it has been completely unwilling to show similar concern for the job impact that BSE is starting to have in rural parts of the very same province.

Let me stress again, as strongly as I can, the point that BSE can destroy jobs in rural Ontario every bit as much as SARS has hurt jobs in Toronto. A job which is lost due to the spin-out from BSE is every bit as much a job which is lost due to the spin-out from SARS.

Therefore, my question is: when will the government stop being less generous to rural Canadians than it has been to Torontonians?

● (1940)

Ms. Colleen Beaumier (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the hon. member has asked me to comment on the marine 24-hour rule.

As the minister announced on April 4, I am happy to report that following extensive consultations with stakeholders Canada will be implementing a 24-hour advance cargo notification rule for marine cargo importation.

A 24-hour advance notification represents the timeframe by which ocean carriers and freight forwarders would be required to submit data to customs electronically before loading in the foreign port. The data will be processed through automated targeting systems. Based on a risk assessment, the CCRA will identify certain containers for examination prior to loading.

This rule provides consistent reporting requirements for North American marine shipments. It is one more step toward implementing the customs action plan launched in 2000 and supports the Canada—U.S. smart border declaration.

The 24-hour rule for marine cargo allows the CCRA to manage risks effectively by identifying high risk cargo before it leaves the foreign port.

The 24-hour rule will be implemented by April 2004, allowing the CCRA, the carrier-freight forwarder and importer-broker communities time to prepare their business operations and systems for implementation.

I am sure my hon. colleague will be interested to note that while there has been overwhelming support during consultations for a common North American approach to cargo reporting, there was, however, concern about reporting timeframes for other modes.

The CCRA is in the process of consulting with our importing and exporting communities and will be in a position to propose a timeframe for pre-notification for the other modes in the near future.

I understand that the U.S. proposes eight hours for air cargo, four hours for land cargo, 24 hours for rail cargo and 24 hours for exports out of the United States.

It is important to know that these U.S. proposals were initial proposals designed to foster discussion and debate and they have resulted in the engagement of the importing and exporting communities on both sides of the border.

We are working with the U.S. bureau of customs and border protection to develop mutually acceptable timeframes for these other modes. I am confident that this will be achieved given our successful track record with the bureau both in developing other harmonized processes, like FAST and Nexus, and our more recent agreement respecting the new rail process for CN and CP shipments entering the United States, which includes advanced timeframes for rail reporting.

In addition to working with our U.S. partners, the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency is also working diligently with both the Canadian importing and exporting communities and our colleagues at Foreign Affairs and International Trade to ensure we develop and implement timeframes for these other modes which are effective for all concerned parties.

● (1945)

Mr. Scott Reid: Madam Speaker, I am astonished by the parliamentary secretary's response. I was asking about Canadian exports to the United States. She gave a very thorough explanation of what we are doing with regard to American imports to Canada.

The problem here is not whether we are imposing a rule on American imports to Canada, it is American exports from Canada that is the problem

The 24-hour rule for shipments, particularly containerized shipments, by sea, by sea transportation is slow. The 24-hour rule is not the problem. I am talking about truck traffic and rail traffic and no mention was made as to any successes being achieved. We only hear talk of what might be achieved in the future. I noticed that the American proposals were mentioned but not actual negotiations with the Americans.

I would like to have a further explanation on whether the government has been proactive in this regard and when we can expect guarantees that the 24-hour rule will not be imposed for truck and rail traffic to the United States.

Ms. Colleen Beaumier: Madam Speaker, I believe that if the hon. member had listened carefully he would have talked about harmonization and implementation on the part of Canada.

I remind members that 18 months ago it would not have been thought possible that we could have harmonized programs with the U.S. at our land, air and sea borders. However, not only do we have agreements on these new programs, they have been implemented and are operational at our major ports of entry, such as Nexus and FAST joint in-transit container targeting.

Also, we are in the process of developing others like Nexus air and the harmonized commercial process for all the other commercial shipments not covered by FAST.

We are confident that we will arrive at a mutually acceptable conclusion on the issue of advanced timeframes for commercial shipments for other modes.

FISHERIES

Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's West, PC): Madam Speaker, some time ago I asked the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, in light of the fact that he had closed the groundfishery in parts of Atlantic Canada, specifically Newfoundland and Labrador, what he planned to do for those affected.

The minister defended the fact that he had to close the fishery and, in relation to part of that, we do not argue with him, but there certainly was no need to close all of it.

However, in relation to helping the people involved, I would like to quote the minister. He said:

> As far as the assistance to those communities, the government takes it very seriously. We announced in April a short term package.

When the minister made that announcement in April, he announced a short term package to help the people involved. This is June and only today did we hear about the meagre assistance being provided. This is unforgiveable.

Let me add a little bit. The minister also said:

> We announced consultations for long term measures. We continue to look at any way we can to work with all partners concerned to assist those communities in very difficult circumstances.

If all these partners are Liberal members who have huddled together to come up with some way to help these people, then that is a very poor solution to a major problem. Where are all the provincial members, the premier, the opposition members, the leaders of their parties who individually were involved, the FRCC, and other individuals in the province who recommended to the minister how to address this colossal failure of a resource?

When the parliamentary secretary responds on behalf of his minister, a gentleman who knows all about the Newfoundland fishery because he has been on the fisheries committee and has participated solidly and has supported our concerns, I hope he will tell us that there is more to the response of money from the Department of Fisheries being funneled through HRDC, than extending employment insurance for a few months and then putting together make work programs.

When the fishery was closed, a major moratorium in the early 1990s, the government responded immediately, and even though the response was not adequate in any way, shape or form, the people could get on with their lives.

We have been waiting since April for a solution and have been told that the government will extend, retroactively I hope, employment insurance to give it time to put together some make work programs. This is not the way to solve this major problem. Everybody involved with any clue recommended that now was the time for the government to be visionary.

We must keep people involved in the fishery, and we can do that. There are areas where resources can be reallocated. There are areas where we could do scientific research, go after new species, which we could not afford to do on our own, areas where we can control the seal herds, and we can go on and on.

However we will draw employment insurance and wait for make work programs. I ask the government to please tell me that there is more to it than this, that we will be proactive for a change, that we will be visionary and that we will try to rebuild the fishery, not destroy the people who have made a living on it.

● (1950)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Georges Farrah (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for St. John's West for his speech and also for the opportunity to to discuss this very important issue, both for the people of Newfoundland—be they in the hon. member's riding or elsewhere—and the people of my riding, which has been hard hit.

The hon. member was asking what the government intended to do. I think that, first, we have shown good faith in announcing the moratorium on cod and groundfish. In fact, we announced $44 million in short-term measures to compensate for the inconvenience this caused the communities concerned.

This affects a little more than 4,000 people. We realized that these short-term measures could not be put in place overnight. Today, knowing that people are suffering for lack of income, we announced an additional $27 million. Before the short-term measures are implemented, these people will be entitled to income not exceeding $325 a week retroactive to April 27 when the moratorium on groundfish was announced. This is being done to ensure that people do not run out of money before the short-term measures are implemented.

Second, the member told us that more vision is needed. I agree with him except that first it is important to establish and introduce short-term measures to ensure that people have an income. That is the first step.

The second phase will be cooperation with the industry, the processors, the fishers and the plant workers to develop a long term strategy. We will make sure they can stay in other sectors of the same industry. This is the reason behind the recent announcement made by the minister on northern shrimp. He has raised by 30,000 tonnes the allowable catch of northern shrimp, so that workers can turn to other sectors. The shrimp biomass allowed this additional catch.

The hon. member talked about the moratorium in 1991-92, some ten years ago. It has been very expensive for the taxpayer, almost $4 billion. It may have been justified, but we realize after ten years that things are not necessarily much better, even with an investment of $3 billion in the first phase of the moratorium.

This is why we must be careful. We must ensure that these people have a short-term income because they have been hard hit. But, also, it is not only a matter of money. I think that, yes, we will have to put more money into long-term measures, but perhaps we should not repeat the mistake that we made in the first moratorium. We must ensure that, if we invest money, it will be to sustain this industry. These people do not want to depend on governments. They do not want to depend on government budgets year after year. As the member said so well, and I agree with him, these people want to work in the industry.

This is why we are getting involved right away. I agree that these are not long-term measures, because we do not have time. This is why we have an emergency budget and we will quickly begin working on long-term measures. We must not repeat the mistake that we made in the first moratorium and we must ensure that these people have access to a resource that will allow them to make a decent living for the future, without the assistance of governments.

● (1955)

[*English*]

Mr. Loyola Hearn: Madam Speaker, I thank the parliamentary secretary for standing up and answering my question pointedly rather than coming in and reading a prepared script written by someone else, which is what we see most of the time. I thank the hon. gentleman for addressing the problem as I presented it today.

First let me say that $325 a week, which is a lot less than they received under the original moratorium, will not go very far during the time of year when these people would be making their peak earnings.

Second, I understand that it only applies to people who were making at least 25% of their income from the fishery before it closed. If that is the case, that will not be a problem for people who were making $50,000, $60,000 or $80,000 on crab or some other species. However many of the smaller boats, which are probably making say $20,000 or less on crab or shrimp, and made—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): The hon. parliamentary secretary.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Georges Farrah: Madam Speaker, I agree, it would be a lot better if we could give them even more money. But the fact remains that these amounts are quite substantial. I think we have shown our good will by taking action rapidly, as a government.

That is the argument that was advanced. We felt that with regard to SARS in Toronto we had to take emergency measures. But the situation in Newfoundland was just as important. That is why we took action.

I agree that perhaps we would like to spend more money, but unfortunately we have limited means. However, I think we have proved our good faith. For the benefit of the hon. member, I must tell him that for fishermen to be eligible, 25% of their income should come from cod. With regard to processing plant workers—the hon. member might not be as happy to hear about that—50% of their income must be derived from cod. Therefore, this is twice as much, compared to fishermen's income. I said this for his information. I could give him further information later on, if he so desires.

I really do want to say that we showed our good faith in this case, in our effort to guarantee that these people would at least receive an income in the short term.

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:58 p.m.)

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