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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, September 17, 2003

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, September 17, 2003

The House met at 2 p.m.

• (1405)

Prayers

[English]

The Speaker: As is our practice on Wednesday we will now sing O Canada, and we will be led by the hon. member for Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Aldershot.

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

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1355)

[English]

JOHN STEVENS

Mr. Walt Lastewka (St. Catharines, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to pay tribute today to Mr. John Stevens, a respected businessman and community leader in my riding of St. Catharines, who passed away on September 2, 2003.

John was born on January 7, 1918, in Grantham Township. In 1941 John and his wife Marguerite were married prior to his service overseas during World War II. After the war, John resumed his Fruitbelt Trucking Business, which he ran until his retirement in 1971.

John was a dynamic and extremely active member of his community. He was a St. Catharines alderman from 1965 to 1969, a member of the St. Catharines Rowing Club and the minor and junior lacrosse clubs. He was a life member of the St. Catharines Old Boys Lacrosse Club and was inducted into the St. Catharines Sports Hall of Fame as a builder in 2002.

I offer my condolences to John's wife Marguerite, his children, Neil, Bill and Carolyn, and all his family. John Stevens did much for the community of which he was so very proud. He will be sorely missed, but his contribution will live on in St. Catharines for many years to come: a great friend to many, John Stevens.

TERRORISM

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, a security expert recently stated that Canada is providing a “vener of legitimacy” to the terrorist activities of the Tamil Tigers by failing to outlaw the group as the United States, Great Britain and Australia have done.

Almost a year ago the RCMP reported that 8,000 Tamil Tigers involved in extortion, intimidation and the smuggling of migrants were operating in the Toronto area. Based on evidence that the Tamil Tigers raise several millions of dollars a year in Canada to purchase weapons to foster their terrorist activities, CSIS has repeatedly warned the federal government to outlaw this terrorist organization.

Despite this overwhelming evidence from security and intelligence agencies, the Solicitor General refuses to outlaw the Tamil Tigers. He does so at great risk to the nation. I implore the Solicitor General to finally do the right thing and outlaw the Tamil Tigers.

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HEALTH

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on September 15, 2003, North America's first government sanctioned supervised safe injection site opened in Vancouver. Funded by three levels of government, it is part of the harm reduction component of the four-pillar approach to substance use in the Vancouver agreement.

Health Canada will provide \$1.5 million over four years for evaluation of this project, which will be undertaken by the B.C. Centre of Excellence in HIV/AIDS at St. Paul's Hospital. The Vancouver Health Authority will operate the site in partnership with the Portland Hotel Society, a non-profit organization with experience working with the IV drug community.

Safe injection sites in Europe and Australia have shown positive results in decreasing overdose deaths, HIV/AIDS and hepatitis C and in acting as a primary contact for users who do not normally have access to medical and social worker teams.

This project is supported by the community and the Vancouver Police, who will continue strong enforcement strategies against suppliers. This safe injection site is an historic and progressive part of good public health policy that recognizes substance abuse and addiction as a chronic debilitating illness.

S. O. 31

[*Translation*]

RIDING OF TÉMISCAMINGUE

Mr. Gilbert Barrette (Témiscamingue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with your permission, I rise to speak as a newly elected member of this House, representing the riding of Témiscamingue. This week, I am experiencing a number of firsts.

It is an honour for me to take my place in this House to represent the people of my riding. I would like to thank the voters who contributed to my victory on June 16, my Liberal colleagues who gave me their confidence and support, and, finally the dedicated volunteers who encouraged me, supported me and made the campaign a success, not only for me, but for the Liberal party, making a comeback in the riding after more than 20 years.

I am proud to be the voice of the people of the riding of Témiscamingue in the House of Commons and have no doubt that we will actively seek to bring about the fair and equitable evolution of society for the benefit of all our fellow citizens.

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MARCHAND BRIDGE

Mr. Robert Bertrand (Pontiac—Gatineau—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is now official: after years of debate to determine which is the longest covered bridge in Quebec, we finally have the answer. In an article in *Le Droit* on August 13, we learned that the winner is the magnificent Marchand bridge in Mansfield—Fort-Coulonge.

The Marchand bridge is 152.1 m long, while the Notre-Dame-des-Pins bridge in the Beauce measures 150.9 m. The bridge at Notre-Dame-des-Pins had always been considered the longest in Quebec because the old departments of colonization, and highways and transportation used a different method of calculation that did not take into account one portion of the Marchand bridge that is indeed an integral part of its structure.

The Marchand bridge, which has always been the longest and the most beautiful in the eyes of the people of Mansfield—Fort-Coulonge, is a great source of pride and a precious part of our heritage.

Who knows? Perhaps in a few years we will even find this famous bridge on a stamp from Canada Post.

* * *

•(1410)

[*English*]

MARRIAGE

Mr. Grant McNally (Dewdney—Alouette, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Liberal government proved that Canadians cannot trust it to keep its word.

In 1999 the House passed a motion promising to protect marriage as the union of one man and one woman. The Liberals promised to defend the traditional definition of marriage but instead have done nothing. They have refused to appeal court decisions legalizing same sex marriages, and in 10 years in office they have failed to protect marriage by defining it in law.

Hundreds of my constituents have contacted me to support the traditional definition of marriage during the past several months. They were sadly disappointed last night when the vote on our motion was defeated by the narrowest of margins. Cabinet solidarity was the reason our motion was defeated, and proved that the Liberal government never intended to keep its promise to Canadians.

How can Canadians possibly trust this government to keep any promise? Clearly the choice for Canadians is to replace this government that will say anything to get elected and nothing to keep its promises.

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TORONTO POLICE SERVICES

Ms. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to rise today to congratulate the winners of 31 Division, Toronto Police Services, 3rd Annual Bursary Awards given to young people in my riding who have shown outstanding academic achievement at secondary school. These bursaries will allow them to continue their studies at a post-secondary institute.

Please join me in congratulating the following exceptional students: Samia Ali, Neetu Bambrah, April Breen, Lisa Dell'Erede, Jennifer Edun, Clara-Jaye Levy, Nick Lovano, Michael Salopek, Amanda Thomas, and Justin Wright.

Well done everyone. My best wishes to them in their future careers.

I also want to recognize 31 Division for its superb service and commitment in our community, and to thank it for sponsoring these special awards. It is an important presence in our local neighbourhoods and does a wonderful job protecting our community.

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[*Translation*]

TERRORISM

Mr. Richard Marceau (Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on September 9, Israel was hit by two terrorist attacks in five hours. Fourteen innocent people were killed, the two suicide bombers lost their lives, and dozens of others were injured.

These despicable, unspeakable acts of violence killed men and women who were simply boarding a bus in Tel Aviv or drinking coffee outside the popular Hillel cafe in Jerusalem.

Among the victims were a father and daughter. Dr. David Applebaum and his daughter Nava were meeting in connection with her wedding the following day. Rather than celebrating a wedding, the family met to bury their dead.

The Bloc Québécois condemns in the strongest possible terms these acts of murderous madness and solemnly asks the Government of Canada to exert the necessary pressure on the Palestinian Authority so that it cracks down on Hamas, Al Jihad and the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade.

[English]

WORLD CYCLING CHAMPIONSHIPS

Ms. Beth Phinney (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, cyclists from all over the world will be rolling into the city of Hamilton to participate in the World Cycling Championships the week of October 6 to 12.

More than 800 athletes from 50 nations will compete in 10 events varying in length from 10 kilometres to 280 kilometres. These athletes will compete in events designed to test their speed, skill and endurance.

The World Cycling Championships are expected to draw over 250,000 spectators to the city of Hamilton. Our city will be on display to the world as these athletes navigate our streets. The World Cycling Championships will be an exhilarating event for both the athletes and the spectators.

Good luck to the athletes and congratulations to the citizens of Hamilton for hosting this world sporting event.

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• (1415)

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton Centre-East, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, after spending the last 17 days on the road with the cattle liner talking to thousands of farmers across all political stripes, they tell me the time on the clock has run out. The borders must be opened, and opened now.

Canada's farmers are in crisis mode as we speak. Desperate decisions are being made by farmers all across Canada. Farmers say that shooting and burying 800,000 head of cattle is not a solution, it is insanity.

As parliamentarians we must do better. Farmers say that the Minister of Agriculture must get the lead out, stop the politics and start the border. The border was not closed by one sick cow. The border is closed by sick politics. It is time to make farmers a priority in Canada. A country that loses its farming production loses its sovereignty.

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CANADA-U.S. RELATIONS

Mr. Pat O'Brien (London—Fanshawe, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada's relationship with the United States is vital to our political, economic and security interests. Today the government has acted to enhance our already excellent relationship with the United States.

To promote our strategic business interests and increase Canada's profile, we will be opening seven new consulates in the United States and appointing 20 honorary consuls.

These new consulates will be located in Denver, Houston, Raleigh-Durham, San Diego, Philadelphia, Phoenix and Anchorage. They will increase Canada's ability to develop partnerships in emerging economic centres in the United States. It will give us a greater presence in areas where we want to enhance trade, particularly the American southwest.

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The Government of Canada is committed to facilitating Canadian companies that want to expand and do business with our American neighbours. We are committed to constantly finding opportunities to improve and enhance the close relationship between our two nations.

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AGRICULTURE

Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon—Souris, PC): Mr. Speaker, as usual when I come back to the House after summer recess, colleagues of mine and members of the staff always want to know if I had a good summer.

I can honestly say I did not have a good summer. I have been dealing with some very desperate people in my riding with respect to the border closure of May 20. These are desperate people. They are people who are totally depressed. This is not like the softwood lumber where we can put two by fours on a trailer. These are animals which have to be fed when there is no feed, no money and no market.

There is a demonstration out there right now with hundreds of producers who want to know from the Minister of Agriculture what if anything he is doing and when will the border be open to live cattle?

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[Translation]

MUNICIPALITY OF NORMANDIN

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the residents of Normandin in the riding of Roberval have erected a magnificent monument in their municipal park in tribute to the surveyor Joseph-Laurent Normandin, who was charged with defining the boundaries of the Domaine du Roy and the watershed north of Lac Saint-Jean. Normandin township was named after him, as was the town later built there.

Today in the House, I want to salute this initiative, which seeks to immortalize this important time in our collective history.

The people of Normandin are proud and have a strong sense of values. This is not the first good initiative by the inhabitants of this dynamic agricultural community.

They have also created a truly beautiful place to visit: the Grands Jardins.

I invite everyone travelling through our region to visit these beautiful gardens and say hello to the residents of Normandin.

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[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Dan McTeague (Pickering—Ajax—Uxbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last January I met a man whose act of compassion and human kindness many would have difficulty duplicating.

Oral Questions

Justin Rodway not only agreed to meet with me in England and discuss the tragic loss of his father, Christopher Rodway, in a Riyadh bomb blast, but also to write a letter requesting the pardoning of William Sampson and the two other individuals directly accused of the bombing.

The letter was sent to the Saudi government. A copy was also provided to Mr. Sampson's lawyers for inclusion in their appeal.

Under Saudi law, only the eldest son of a murder victim can request clemency for those sentenced to death for the crime. Justin's letter ensured the accused would not be executed if the death sentence were upheld. The letter would also help in obtaining a royal pardon.

Justin Rodway is in Ottawa today. With him is Mrs. Barbara Sampson, William's mother. She is a woman of great personal strength and one who never gave up hope that her son would be released.

On behalf of this House, I welcome them to Ottawa. I extend best wishes to the Sampson family and of course special thanks to Justin for his steadfast belief in the justice system and in the innocence of Alexander Mitchell, Raf Schyvens and Bill Sampson.

* * *

• (1420)

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this Liberal government has been a bad news government for women.

Research just released by the Canadian Labour Congress not only confirms that the employment insurance system is failing to meet the needs of women, but that changes brought in by this government in 1996 and 1997 have actually made women's situation worse.

From 1996 to 2001 the gap between men and women receiving benefits has almost doubled. Women over 45, who were almost at a par with men in 1996, are now 13% behind.

In Manitoba the gap has grown from 9% to 20%, while in Quebec it has exploded from 3% to 14%.

The nature of work has changed, yet this government has taken no action to support women who make up the bulk of the new part time service workforce. It has simply defined those, who need help most, out of the benefit range. Only one-third of unemployed women can collect benefits, only 16% in Regina.

It is time to clean the bias against women out of the EI system. It is time to make EI work for women, not against them.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

VOYAGEUR COLONIAL PENSION FUND

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, in 1996 the former finance minister sold Voyageur Colonial bus lines. In doing so he left the employees with

a \$2.5 million deficit in their pension plan and up to a 30% cut in their pensions.

This is a pension plan that was supposed to have been protected by the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions, an office for which the former finance minister was responsible at the time.

Why did OSFI allow the former finance minister to shortchange his own retired bus drivers?

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions operates as an independent agency. His watchdog role is one in which the minister plays no direct role. Consequently, there would be no conflict.

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that answer. That is the way it is supposed to work.

However access to information documents that we have show that the former finance minister's senior staff had direct contact with OSFI. At least two senior political aides were briefed on the file. His own staff attended regular meetings to discuss the closing of the file on the Voyageur pension deficit.

My question is this. Is it true, is it possible, does the government know whether OSFI closed the books on the Voyageur employees because the former finance minister wanted it to?

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): No, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure whether or not means they do not know or they have investigated and know the answer.

Let me give the minister some additional information. In the minutes we have obtained from access to information an OSFI official was asked point blank, "What political pressure has been put on OSFI?" The response is blank. The answer has been whited out.

What is the government hiding? What political pressure did the former finance minister apply?

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, items that are blanked out in response to access to information are reviewed by the appropriate officers of the information commissioner. He reports independently to parliament. He is an officer of the House.

Consequently, there is no basis on the fact that information was not disclosed to conclude what that information was.

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AGRICULTURE

Mr. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the parliamentary secretary for agriculture said that with the border open a crack the crisis is over.

Oral Questions

The agriculture minister thinks since he threw around a few dollars livestock producers are saved. Guess what, both of them are wrong and both need new jobs.

Farmers are on Parliament Hill today to ask questions of their AWOL minister. When will he accept the industry's recommendations and announce phase two and the budget to implement it? When will the minister do that?

Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank Canadians and all the members in the House for supporting the beef industry this summer. We know the situation that has been created in the beef industry.

I also want to say and point out to the hon. member that it was only a very few weeks after the situation that the government came forward with over \$300 million. There are hundreds of millions of dollars more available to producers. Let us use that up and then we will see what more money we need after that. That is the goal that I have. Unfortunately, there has to be agreements to allow that to flow. We will do that.

Meanwhile we will continue to work on opening the borders more than they are open at the present time.

• (1425)

Mr. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the minister stays true to form. He always ignores the victims in this. He is forgetting about the farm and ranch families, the real folks out there, and the livestock producers. The primary producers are left hanging out to dry.

Why does the minister always put his own political agenda ahead of these producing families?

Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have spent \$560 million between the federal government and the provincial governments since June. There are hundreds of millions of dollars available in the programs that we have for the farmers. That money can flow to the farmers in interim payments as soon as the signatures are there to allow it to flow.

The United States, Mexico and other countries have recognized the food safety system that we have in Canada. These countries have begun to open their borders. The United States is expediting the process to open its border to live cattle under 30 months of age. We will continue working with all those countries.

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[Translation]

FINANCE

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, even though the Minister of Finance acknowledged that he cannot start preparing his next budget without knowing the next Prime Minister's point of view, the Liberal members who dominate the Standing Committee on Finance objected to the member for LaSalle—Émard appearing before the committee. The minister prefers to speak to business people anyway. In his words, that is the democratic deficit.

In this context, will the Minister of Finance prefer to concoct his budget in secret with the next Prime Minister, or will he be

transparent and welcome his comments as part of the pre-budget consultation process?

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during the meetings that began this week, the Standing Committee on Finance has already started preparing for the next budget.

Furthermore, later this fall, as usual, I will present the programs and the state of our finances. The Department of Finance will be ready to table a budget in the winter or earlier, if necessary.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in anticipation of the budget, the current Prime Minister is recommending that the federal government invest heavily, especially in Quebec jurisdictions.

Will the Minister of Finance consult his future boss to find out whether he agrees with such an encroachment strategy, which has been made possible by the massive cuts imposed on Quebec and the provinces by the former Minister of Finance and next Prime Minister?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada is very respectful of provincial jurisdictions. The hon. member would not be able to give a single example of encroachment.

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, during the reign of the last finance minister, the member for LaSalle—Émard, the well-known tax haven of Barbados became the third ranking destination, just behind the United States and the United Kingdom, for direct Canadian investments abroad, at over \$23 billion.

Does the Minister of Finance plan to follow in the footsteps of his predecessor and allow Canadian corporations to continue to take advantage of tax shelters, like the five major banks that have thus avoided having to pay some \$2 billion in taxes, or will he put an end to the use of these tax dodges so that all taxpayers are treated fairly?

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is well aware that we have reduced the burden on the taxpayer by \$100 billion over five years. All Canadians have benefited from that decision.

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the former finance minister had a lot to say about tax havens but did nothing about them. His companies, however, used them to great advantage.

Does the present finance minister plan to perpetuate this laissez-faire attitude or does he plan to side with the Auditor General, who has spoken out against the erosion of the tax base, a direct result of the use of these tax havens?

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have answered this question on a number of occasions here in this House. It is clear that we have treaties with other countries that affect taxation levels. This has been studied often. Since 1993 we have introduced measures aimed at reducing taxes. We also have treaties to protect the levels of taxation on Canadian companies with connections to these other countries.

Oral Questions

● (1430)

[English]

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): Mr. Speaker, there should be no greater priority in the country right now for the government than addressing the BSE crisis and getting the border open. It has been 120 days since the nightmare began. The government has been ineffective and unable to get the border open.

I would like to ask the Prime Minister or the Deputy Prime Minister if the government is willing to participate in a non-partisan effort to send a delegation to Washington with stakeholders to get the border open for Canadian cattle.

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree with the hon. member that there has been no priority of greater significance to the government.

Since the outbreak of BSE we have been trying to deal with the crisis that was created. Let us understand that it is not the Canadian border that is closed. The Canadian border is open. It is the borders of our partners in trade that are closed.

At every level of the government, the Minister of Agriculture, the Prime Minister, myself and other counter-colleagues have dealt with our counterparts again and again. We have met with some success but more is sought. We will not rest until the border is open.

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): Mr. Speaker, where was the Deputy Prime Minister, where was the House leader, where was the Prime Minister and where was the agriculture minister a few hours ago when farmers from the Ottawa valley gathered on the front lawn of Parliament? They wanted to hear from their representatives. They wanted to hear from the government.

What exactly is the plan? What is being done to open the border? Why were there no representatives of the Liberal Party on the steps of Parliament to answer to the people they are supposed to represent?

Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not know where the Liberal Party was nor where we will be. We told that group yesterday that we would meet with them, the rural caucus and myself, this afternoon. We will meet with representatives later this afternoon. We have done that all along and we will continue.

As far as opening the border, the hon. member should recognize what our industry has done, what our food inspection agency has done and what members on all sides of the House have done. They have pointed out to the United States, and Canadians have said, that Canadian beef is safe. It is the first time in history that any non-BSE country has opened up to a product from a BSE country. I guess they forgot that.

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the mark of a good Minister of Agriculture is that we should be able to find a certain substance on his boots, not in what he said when he gets up in the House of Commons.

The fact is that the Minister of Agriculture was a no-show today and has been a no-show all summer for the people in the cattle industry.

Therefore I will address my question to the Deputy Prime Minister. When is the government going to get it and do something for farmers instead of just resting until the border is open?

Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the hon. member is saying that \$300 million on top of the other support that is there for Canadian farmers is a small amount of money.

Certainly we know they would like more. There are hundreds of millions of dollars more that the government wants to move to Canadian farmers but we must have the legal authority to do so.

I have had the signing authority since April to do that for the provinces and for the producers in the provinces. Let us use that money up. We have partially opened the borders to Canada and Mexico and some other countries. Their borders are closed and they are the ones that need to open them. We have shown them the science and they are reacting.

* * *

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): What we hear when we do not have a shovel, Mr. Speaker.

My question is for the Deputy Prime Minister. It has to do with the advice that his boss, the Prime Minister, is giving to the future prime minister with respect to cities and the need to invest in cities.

I want to ask the Deputy Prime Minister in his capacity as Minister of Finance and successor to the former minister of finance whether he agrees with the advice that the Prime Minister is giving to the future prime minister and, if so, can we expect to see something from this current Minister of Finance for cities?

● (1435)

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, not only do we expect to continue to support the cities in the future but we have been supporting the cities and municipalities in the past, starting with the municipal infrastructure program in 1994, building on it year after year, up to and including the last budget which included a \$3 billion increase in the amount of support for municipal infrastructure in Canada; more money for housing, more money to support cities in the necessities that they face in providing services to their people on a daily basis.

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VOYAGEUR COLONIAL PENSION FUND

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I would like the finance minister to think very carefully before he answers these questions.

According to OSFI, the failure of the Voyageur pension plan was “the first failure of a federally-supervised pension plan involving significant loss” in history. Hundreds of bus drivers have been shortchanged by this disaster.

Oral Questions

I would say that the former finance minister obviously has some explaining to do but, for now, I want to ask this finance minister the following question. Why has he refused to investigate what appears to be a direct conflict of interest involving his predecessor?

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I understand that the hon. member has recently returned to the front bench as critic for finance and I welcome him there, but I hope that he can find more substantial questions than that to pose.

OSFI is an independent entity. It deals with pension plans under authority given to it by Parliament. It is never appropriate for the finance minister to comment on any individual pension plan. The duty of OSFI is to protect the interest of pensioners and it does it independently.

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I can tell the finance minister that this question goes right to the integrity of the government. It goes to the integrity of the former finance minister. It is very relevant.

These are the facts. OSFI ordered an audit of the pension plan but after the former finance minister's staff met with OSFI the audit was secretly altered.

Why has the finance minister refused to investigate what has the appearance of a direct conflict of interest involving his predecessor? What is the problem?

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member is making groundless allegations. He is attempting to create a scandal where none exists. The fact is that the independence of OSFI is not something that is subject to the whim of a finance minister. The independence of OSFI is founded in legislation.

If he has a problem with how the superintendent of financial institutions has conducted his responsibilities, then let him take it up in the appropriate parliamentary committee.

* * *

[Translation]

GASOLINE TAX

Ms. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on the one hand, the finance minister's predecessor reduced the tax burden of oil companies by more than \$250 million while, on the other hand, maintaining the 1.5¢ increase in the excise tax on gasoline, which was designed to eliminate the deficit. The fact is that since the deficit was eliminated, this tax has allowed the government to rake in at least \$2.8 billion.

Now that the deficit is gone, will the Minister of Finance eliminate this tax for which there is no longer any justification, or does he plan to maintain it and go along with a strategy put in place by his predecessor?

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): First, Mr. Speaker, it should be pointed out that the public debt is made up of accumulated deficits. That still exists.

Second, in 2000, we made a decision as a government to reduce the tax burden by \$100 billion. This was a very significant tax cut.

At the time, it was clear that the other taxes would be maintained. So, there was a tax cut. We have to accept that.

We supported the decision to cut income taxes.

Ms. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister chose to reduce the tax liabilities of oil companies instead of helping consumers, who are being hit with one gasoline price hike after another. Is the Minister of Finance going to maintain the policy developed by his predecessor, who was more concerned with the major oil companies than with consumers and the disadvantaged?

• (1440)

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I fail to understand why the hon. member does not get it. A \$100 billion cut over five years applies to everyone. It benefits all taxpayers. This is the most significant tax cut in the history of this country. So, everyone benefits from this tax cut.

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[English]

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, if you thought George Radwanski was over the top on his expense account then listen to this.

Charles Boyer, the former executive assistant to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, spent \$28,000 on meals in less than two years. We know he dined out 65 times and spent over \$7,500 at the same restaurant, and the taxpayer paid.

My question is for the Minister of Canadian Heritage. Why did she approve \$28,000 of fine dining for her assistant at the taxpayers' expense?

[Translation]

Ms. Carole-Marie Allard (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to inform this House that all the reimbursements were made in accordance with Treasury Board guidelines.

However, for greater certainty, the minister has asked that all claims be reviewed again to ensure that they were made in accordance with Treasury Board guidelines.

[English]

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, we know they did not comply with the guidelines because it did not tell us who he took for dinner. There is problem number one. This is the minister who spent \$180,000 and did not provide one receipt for the money she claimed from the government. Now her assistant is eating at the trough and we do not know who he is eating with.

Why did the minister allow her assistant to treat the government and his job as an all you can eat buffet and stick the taxpayer with a \$28,000 bill?

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Ms. Carole-Marie Allard (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since I am told that all the reimbursements were made in accordance with Treasury Board rules, I have to rely on what officials tell me.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Neigette-et-la Mitis, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the previous minister of finance siphoned \$45 billion from the employment insurance fund, while reducing benefits, so that today, only 33% of women and 44% of men out of work are entitled to EI.

Does the Minister of Finance, who is going to help himself to another \$3 billion from the employment insurance fund again this year, intend to continue his predecessor's policy of systematic pillaging for much longer?

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows full well that in this year's budget we have again reduced employment insurance premiums and will do so again next year, as announced. With these reductions, the revenues for the EI fund will be very nearly equal to the program's expenditures. That will continue with a balanced budget.

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Neigette-et-la Mitis, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to the hon. minister that he listen to the question before he answers this time. The EI program is now providing benefits to less than half of the men and women contributors who lose their jobs, which means that, for all intents and purposes, this so-called employment insurance plan is nothing more than a disguised tax on employment.

Does the minister intend to continue his predecessor's irresponsible policy?

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have nothing to add. We have reduced employment insurance premiums each year since 1993. Now, for the coming year, we can say that revenues will be approximately equal to expenditures.

* * *

[English]

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, roughly 800,000 cows and bulls over 30 months of age are normally culled and sent to slaughter every year. We can consume about one-half of them domestically. We cannot export the other half. Disposal of these excess animals is a major unresolved problem. What is the government's plan for disposal of these excess animals?

•(1445)

Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, some time ago, even before the BSE situation, I put in place a beef round table. It has participants from the industry, from the processors and from the consumers. They have been meeting on a regular basis and have spent considerable time with

provincial, federal and industry people recently, talking about the ways which we can develop to use this good meat in a beneficial way. We will be working with the industry to do that.

In the meantime, again I say, let us move the money that we have there in order to assist our producers until we further assess all this and develop the programs and products in order to use this good quality meat.

Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, more failure by the minister.

The fall roundup is starting right now. Cull animals are being separated out every day. They cannot be sold for enough to cover transportation and selling costs. Ranchers cannot afford to feed them. The government's lack of action will force the ranchers to shoot and bury them on the ranch rather than feed them.

Why, four months into this economic crisis, this social crisis, has the government done absolutely nothing?

Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to point to out to the hon. member, to the House and to all Canadians that because of the efforts of everybody, of governments, individual Canadians and organizations and our food chains, grocery stores and retailers in Canada, in the first two or three weeks after the one animal was found, we only slaughtered about 23,000 to 25,000 animals a week in Canada. In the last week in August we moved that up to 73,000 animals a week, which is more than we were slaughtering before the situation occurred back in May.

That is the approach that we will continue to take to find markets and uses for the good Canadian beef that has been recognized by all Canadians and that is being recognized by our customers in the world.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. Andrew Telegdi (Kitchener—Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice.

Violent hate crimes targeting gays and lesbians are all too common in Canada. Today the House will vote on the inclusion of sexual orientation and hate propaganda laws along with existing grounds of race, colour, religion and ethnic origin.

Will the minister confirm his support for Bill C-250 and confirm as well that particularly with the Liberal amendment passed in the House earlier this year, the bill fully protects religious freedoms and religious texts such as the Bible, the Koran or the Torah?

Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for the question. It is a very important topic in Bill C-250.

I would like to tell the House that indeed we support the bill as amended. Of course when it is looked at, it is consistent with the government's position and policy. That bill will include sexual orientation in the hate propaganda provisions of the Criminal Code while protecting at the same time religious beliefs, that is to say, opinions and texts as well.

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mrs. Elsie Wayne (Saint John, PC): Mr. Speaker, the government is once again ignoring the seniors and insulting the veterans. On Monday the veterans affairs minister confirmed that as many as 28,000 widows would be denied access to the veterans independence program. These women were not only the wives of heroes, many were the backbone of the war effort here at home.

Will either of the two prime ministers, the present one or the future one, do the right thing and give these brave Canadian widows the help and support they deserve so they can remain in their homes? Will they make them eligible immediately for the veterans independence program?

Mr. Ivan Grose (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this question has been answered before in this House but nevertheless I will take a run at it.

We have seven programs to increase veterans benefits. We had a budget to operate with. We did not have enough money in the budget to do everything we wanted to do.

I would like to point out to the hon. member opposite that 10,000 spouses will receive the VIP under our new regulations that would not have received it under the old regulations, at a cost of \$65 million.

• (1450)

Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore, PC): Mr. Speaker, for the government to say it does not have enough money for widows is an insult. The government has a record of being unwilling to extend benefits to the widows of the veterans.

Meanwhile, Denise Tremblay, a member of the Veterans Review and Appeal Board and the Prime Minister's former constituency secretary in Saint-Maurice, Quebec, spent more than \$158,000 on personal expenses.

How does the Prime Minister justify these extravagant expenses when widows are refused less than \$100 a month?

Mr. Ivan Grose (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question. I am afraid I do not have an excellent answer, but I will get back to the member as soon as I possibly can.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, indications are that Syria is about to subject Maher Arar to a trial. To add to that nightmare, there is no Canadian ambassador in Syria at the moment and the Canadian government has backtracked from its promise to pay for Mr. Arar's legal counsel.

With no clear charges, no transparency, no Canadian ambassador, and no government support of legal counsel, how are the rights of this Canadian citizen to be protected? The Prime Minister promised the Arar family that he would do everything that he could. What has he done?

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows, as do other members of the House, we have been in regular contact with the government of Syria. In fact when our ambassador last visited Mr. Arar, he specifically said that

Oral Questions

our representations had aided his position, had helped him. He was very grateful for the fact that his position had improved there.

Obviously this is a matter of Mr. Arar being a Syrian national as well as a Canadian national. The Syrian authorities are saying they are going to press charges against him. We have taken the position that they must release him to Canada. We seek to get his release but obviously we must deal with the Syrian authorities in dealing with a Syrian national under Syrian law. We are using all efforts we can to make sure Mr. Arar is well and we get him out—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week the Premier of New Brunswick approved the construction of a toxic waste incinerator in Belledune, in northeast New Brunswick. This was done without any independent environmental impact study. In the meantime, the people of northeast New Brunswick and the Gaspé are opposed to this plan if there is no independent study.

My question is for the Minister of the Environment. With the signing of the Kyoto protocol, is the minister prepared to intervene in the New Brunswick Premier's decision, in order to protect the environment and the people of Chaleur Bay?

[English]

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for the federal government to intervene under the environmental assessment legislation there has to be federal involvement, which is called a trigger, for the legislation to take effect. As I understand it, in this particular instance there is no such trigger. Therefore, it will be left to the province of New Brunswick to handle this particular instance.

* * *

VOYAGEUR COLONIAL PENSION FUND

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, apparently the finance minister would not recognize questionable behaviour if it ran over him in a bus because in October 1997 the deputy superintendent of the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions, Nick LePan, personally contacted Terrie O'Leary in the minister's office to tell her about the Voyageur problem.

Why would the deputy superintendent contact the minister's office when he knew the minister was an owner of Voyageur and therefore in a conflict of interest over this pension plan?

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the normal practice what happens is that the minister's office is informed where there is an issue that is arising with respect to a fund. Obviously it is not in the minister's purview to involve himself in the evaluation of a fund or in the steps that should be required by the Superintendent of Financial Institutions in order to rectify any problems that exist in a fund.

Oral Questions

If there are other questions, they may wish to raise them with OSFI directly.

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, this is more than just a casual contact between offices. The former minister's tire tracks are all over this file. Karl Littler, the minister's Ontario campaign organizer, attended meetings on this issue. The deputy superintendent contacted the minister's office directly and spoke to the minister's staff. OSFI went so far as to write communication packages to selected members of Parliament over there at their request. They are supposed to be there to protect the pensioners, not the minister's reputation.

Why is the ministerial staff and the Superintendent of Financial Institutions working the back rooms instead of working to protect the working guy's pension plan?

• (1455)

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions is independent with respect to the evaluation and the functioning of the fund, as well as with respect to any action, corrective or otherwise, that needs to be taken with respect to the fund.

I think that the hon. member has done nothing, nor has his colleague, except to try to cast aspersions based on nothing, all sound and fury, signifying nothing.

* * *

[Translation]

TAXATION

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the current Prime Minister of Canada revealed his successor's game plan by suggesting that Ottawa get even more heavily involved in social housing, early childhood and education, all of which fall under the jurisdiction of Quebec.

Quebec's intergovernmental affairs minister, Benoît Pelletier, feels that such action by the federal government would just be one more illustration of fiscal imbalance.

Can the Minister of Finance tell us whether he intends to heed this warning by the Quebec minister, or will he instead follow the path laid out by the father of fiscal imbalance, the former finance minister and future prime minister, who claims there is no such thing as fiscal imbalance?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform the hon. member that, in connection with affordable housing, Quebec was one of the first provinces to sign the agreement. That was under the previous government. In all areas to which he has referred, we have managed to play our role while fully respecting provincial jurisdiction. This is one of the strengths of our great federation, which will remain united.

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would remind the hon. member that those comments were made by Quebec's intergovernmental affairs minister, Benoît Pelletier, a Liberal. I am merely reporting them.

Will the Minister of Finance bow to the opinion of his predecessor, the father of fiscal imbalance, and invade the municipal level, or will he instead respect this area of jurisdiction as being solely that of Quebec and the provinces?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is certain that Quebec's present intergovernmental affairs minister will ensure that his areas of jurisdiction are respected, and that he will cooperate with the Government of Canada, because we are all working to build the same country—quite a change from the situation in the past. This is a favourable sign for the coming federal election.

* * *

[English]

VOYAGEUR COLONIAL PENSION FUND

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the member for LaSalle—Émard is on a bumpy road to 24 Sussex.

Voyageur Colonial bus lines, in which he had a 50% share, shortchanged its employees' pension fund by \$2.4 million. Meanwhile, the member across the way received a windfall of a pension surplus from Canada Steamship Lines for \$82.5 million.

You can call me a "Greyhound" if you like, Mr. Speaker, but I want to know, when will these people be compensated for their fair share of what is owed them?

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am a little surprised that the hon. member is showing so much interest in pensions. I thought she had put that behind her.

The integrity of federally regulated pensions are the responsibility of an independent federal agent in the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions. In this case, OSFI conducted itself in the appropriate fashion to do its utmost in order to protect the integrity of that fund.

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, that is nonsense. These bus drivers deserve a pension and the government just laughs them off.

Here is a little riddle. Let us try this one on. When is an audit not quite an audit? When it is altered by OSFI of course, Mr. Speaker. It had no business letting minister's staff in on these meetings and then tinkering with an official audit. But it is just another Liberal scandal. Hardly anyone notices it is happening.

Voyageur's bus drivers and employees got nothing more than a ticket to ride. When will the government stand up and announce new investigations and get to the bottom of this and help these drivers?

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, OSFI operates on an independent basis. It has done so and will continue to do so. It is independent from the government and it conducts its investigations based on information which is readily available and accessible to them.

[Translation]

THE FRANCOPHONIE

Mr. Christian Jobin (Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Secretary of State for Latin America and Africa and the Francophonie attended the Francophonie ministerial conference on the information society, which was held in Morocco on September 4 and 5.

Will the secretary of state report to the House on the results of this conference?

• (1500)

Hon. Denis Paradis (Secretary of State (Latin America and Africa) (Francophonie), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, allow me to congratulate the new member for Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière on his great interest in Francophonie issues.

The purpose of the ministerial conference was to lay the groundwork for the World Summit on Information Society that will take place in Geneva in December.

Naturally, I took the opportunity to promote Canadian information technology initiatives and to demonstrate Canada's leadership in that field.

I also took the opportunity to announce that we will be helping young French-speaking Canadians and Africans participate in that summit.

* * *

[English]

INTERNATIONAL AID

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal approach to foreign aid centres around giving money to friends and supporters.

The Canadian Labour Congress received \$2.1 million in foreign aid, roughly the same amount as the Christian Children's Fund of Canada, UNICEF Canada, Oxfam and Aga Khan Foundation. These genuine NGOs, unlike the Canadian Labour Congress, have solid track records for helping the poor.

Will the minister tell Canadians today that foreign aid dollars will be used to fight poverty and not be given away to Liberal friends and cronies?

Hon. Susan Whelan (Minister for International Cooperation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, obviously the hon. member has not read CIDA's policy statement on strengthening aid effectiveness. The document shows how Canada is concentrating its aid efforts and has taken the aid program in a new direction.

Our partners are essential, as the hon. member must know. In delivering Canada's aid they go through a very scrupulous process to receive money and to be partners, and we work with all of them to ensure we affect and help the poor.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, CIDA has a limited amount of money to meet the UN millennium goals. Squandering hard earned Canadian taxpayer dollars to support friends of the Liberals is just plain wrong. Foreign

Oral Questions

aid should go to NGOs that will alleviate poverty and promote economic growth.

Yet the Liberals continue to aid their friends instead of helping those who really need it. Why?

Hon. Susan Whelan (Minister for International Cooperation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am sure the hon. member would want the House to know that the press release that he sent out reflects only a small portion of the contributions that CIDA makes to a number of organizations. For example, we give 10 times the figure that is in the hon. member's press release to the international Red Cross organization. We would like to have all the facts on the table when we are talking about Canada's foreign aid program.

* * *

[Translation]

CARTAGENA PROTOCOL

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—Petite-Patrie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Cartagena protocol on biosafety has come into force without Canada, which means that Canada is not part of the international consensus on GMO control. If it wants to take part in the first implementation meeting scheduled for February 23 to 27, 2004, in Kuala Lumpur, Canada must ratify the protocol by November 22.

Does the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food realize that unless it ratifies the Cartagena protocol, Canada will not be able to defend its interests on the international scene and is sending the message that trade is more important than the protection of public health?

[English]

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, no decision has been taken on ratification because we are still engaged in consultation with stakeholders, particularly stakeholders in the agricultural sector. That said, the Government of Canada and certainly most of the stakeholders support the objectives of the protocol and we hope a decision can be taken in short order.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Janko Peric (Cambridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health. A landmark national survey found that depression affects as many Canadians as diabetes and heart disease. Mental illness costs our health care system \$5 billion and our economy \$13 billion a year. What steps is the government taking to address the alarming findings of this study?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member raises an important issue, one that should concern all levels of government and non-governmental organizations that work with those who are mentally ill.

Indeed, Health Canada participated in a fact finding project which resulted in the first ever statistical overview of mental illness in Canada. We are now working with other government departments to ensure that its recommendations are implemented. In addition, the CIHR has funded over \$60 million worth of research in relation to mental health, neurosciences and addiction across our country.

Routine Proceedings

This is a very important issue and one which we need to work on together.

* * *

• (1505)

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of the Hon. Christian Mejdahl, Speaker of the Folketing of the Royal Danish Kingdom.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

* * *

[*Translation*]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

The Speaker: It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 81(14), to inform the House that the motion to be considered tomorrow during consideration of the business of supply is as follows:

That, in the opinion of this House, in order to ensure tax equity, the government should terminate Canada's tax convention with Barbados, a tax haven, which enables wealthy Canadian taxpayers and companies to avoid their tax obligations, and should play a leadership role at the international level in activities to eliminate tax havens.

[*English*]

This motion standing in the name of the hon. member for Joliette is votable. Copies of the motion are available at the Table.

* * *

PRIVACY COMMISSIONER

The Speaker: I have the honour to lay upon the Table the 2002-03 report of the Privacy Commissioner. This report is deemed permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Geoff Regan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 20 petitions.

* * *

CONTROLLED DRUGS AND SUBSTANCES ACT

Mrs. Brenda Chamberlain (Guelph—Wellington, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-446, an act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to introduce a bill which seeks to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act which I believe needs to be amended.

In my community, like many others in Canada, there is an alarming growth in the number of large scale marijuana grow operations. While law enforcement officials are putting in every effort to eliminate these operations and catch the individuals

involved, they have expressed a great dismay to me that the courts do not seem to be giving these criminals adequate sentencing.

The purpose of the bill is to provide real sentences and real punishment for those convicted of growing or producing cannabis. It would provide a minimum sentence of imprisonment along with a minimum fine for first time offenders and greater punishment for repeat offenders.

I am tabling the bill because it is time to get tough on these large scale grow-ops and I believe that the bill will do just that.

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

* * *

• (1510)

BROADCASTING ACT

Mr. Reg Alcock (Winnipeg South, Lib.) moved that Bill S-8, an act to amend the Broadcasting Act, be read the first time.

(Motion agreed to and bill read the first time)

* * *

PETITIONS

JUSTICE

Mr. Leon Benoit (Lakeland, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured today to present the latest petition in a series of petitions resulting from the violent and brutal death of Dana Fair. The petitioners call on the government to disallow bail for any accused murderers caught in the act of committing their crime and to impose only the maximum sentence available in situations like this where they are convicted.

MARRIAGE

Mr. Robert Bertrand (Pontiac—Gatineau—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I am happy to table a petition on behalf of my constituents. The petitioners say that marriage is the best foundation for families and the raising of children and that the institution of marriage is between a man and a woman. The petitioners therefore ask that Parliament pass legislation to recognize the institution of marriage as being between a man and a woman.

Mr. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand today after the vote last night to present a petition on the definition of marriage. Of course after the vote last night it will be interesting to see the result of the Liberals' response to this petition now. From 1999 until this point, of course, they agreed with everybody that it was the union of a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others. It will be interesting to see the reply to this petition now, calling for that same thing.

HEALTH

Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I wish to present a petition on behalf of the constituents of Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, who call upon Parliament to protect the health of our seniors and children and to save our environment by banning the disputed gas additive MMT as it creates smog and enhances global warming.

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have another petition presented on behalf of the constituents of Lambton—Kent—Middlesex who call upon Parliament to protect children by taking all necessary steps to ensure that all materials which promote or glorify pedophilia and sado-masochistic activities involving children are outlawed.

MARRIAGE

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I have the privilege to present to this House two different petitions signed by 300 to 400 concerned constituents from my riding of Crowfoot, more specifically, individuals from places such as Stettler, Camrose, Bittern Lake, Veteran, Consort, Coronation, Three Hills, Hardisty, Brownfield, Bawlf, Meeting Creek and Edberg. These petitioners call upon the government to pass legislation to recognize the institution of marriage in federal law as being that of the union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others. Obviously I agree with the sentiments expressed in these petitions and I take a great deal of pleasure in introducing them to the House.

HEALTH

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have more petitions signed by Canadians concerned about the future of health care. Clearly Canadians everywhere are very concerned that this government commissioned the Romanow commission on the future of health care and then let its report sit on a shelf and gather dust, refusing to act on its many recommendations.

The petitions I have today call on the government to see the Romanow commission report as a blueprint, to start to adopt the recommendations and, for goodness' sake, to ensure that we maintain in this country a non-profit, publicly administered health care system that is available and accessible to everyone in this country regardless of where they live and how much money they make.

• (1515)

MARRIAGE

Mr. Reed Elley (Nanaimo—Cowichan, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to present to the House a petition from 125 of my constituents, mostly from Duncan, British Columbia, who would of course be very upset with what happened in this House last night, because the government has not kept its promise to recognize the union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others. They ask that Parliament pass legislation to recognize the institution of marriage in federal law as being the lifelong union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others, which is simply common sense.

Routine Proceedings

STEM CELL RESEARCH

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I seek the indulgence of the House as I have four petitions to present. The first is in regard to ethical stem cell research. The petitioners point out that non-embryonic stem cells, which are known as adult stem cells, have shown significant progress in regard to research, without the immune rejection. Therefore, they call upon Parliament to focus its legislative support on adult stem cell research to find cures and therapies necessary to treat illnesses and diseases of Canadians.

FREEDOM OF RELIGION

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the second petition I have is on amending section 318 of the Criminal Code in regard to freedom of religion and freedom of expression. The petitioners point out that it is Parliament's duty to protect the full extent of freedom of expression, thought and conscience. Therefore, they ask that Parliament take all measures necessary to protect the rights of Canadians to freely share their religious and moral beliefs without fear of prosecution, and they point out that the vote that we are having tonight on Bill C-250 is a very significant vote in that respect.

MARRIAGE

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the third petition is in regard to the defence of marriage. The petitioners point out that it is the duty of Parliament to ensure that marriage, as it always has been known and legally affirmed in Canada, be preserved and protected. They petition Parliament to use all possible legislative administrative measures, including invoking section 33 of the charter if necessary, to preserve and protect the current definition of marriage.

The fourth petition is very similar to the third. The only difference is that it calls upon Parliament to hold a renewed debate on the definition of marriage, to reaffirm it as it did in 1999 and to take all necessary steps to preserve marriage as the union of one man and one woman.

MARIJUANA

Mrs. Brenda Chamberlain (Guelph—Wellington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present several petitions today.

I have signatures of over several hundred Canadians opposed to the decriminalization of marijuana. They ask for better education, prevention, enforcement and treatment programs, and they ask for stronger penalties.

PRAYER

Mrs. Brenda Chamberlain (Guelph—Wellington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I also have signatures of 85 Canadians calling for the designation of a national day of prayer.

Routine Proceedings

MARRIAGE

Mrs. Brenda Chamberlain (Guelph—Wellington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I also have signatures of 25 Canadians supporting and asking Parliament to uphold the traditional definition of marriage.

BILL C-250

Mr. Chuck Cadman (Surrey North, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, it is my pleasure to present a petition from a number of my constituents requesting that Parliament take all measures to halt the passage of Bill C-250.

FOOD AND DRUGS ACT

Mrs. Betty Hinton (Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 I have petitions signed by constituents from my riding of Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys.

The petitioners are asking Parliament to ensure that Canadians have an updated food and drug act that is consistent with Canadians' inherent rights of informed freedom of choice and access to non-drug medicinal products of their own choosing, as protected by sections 1, 2, 7 and 15 of the charter of rights. This petition is in support of Bill C-420.

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Mr. Dale Johnston (Wetaskiwin, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I have four petitions. I will try to be brief.

The first one is from constituents who are mostly in the Rimbey and Bluffton area. They call upon Parliament to protect children by taking all necessary steps to ensure that materials which glorify pedophilia or sado-masochistic activities are prevented.

• (1520)

MARRIAGE

Mr. Dale Johnston (Wetaskiwin, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I also have a petition signed by some 150 constituents calling on Parliament to recognize the institution of marriage in federal law as being a lifelong union of one man and one woman. Those petitioners are mostly from the Wetaskiwin area.

HEALTH

Mr. Dale Johnston (Wetaskiwin, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I also have a petition that calls upon Parliament to give its support to private member's Motion No. 83, which is the study on whether or not therapeutic abortions are medically necessary.

BILL C-250

Mr. Dale Johnston (Wetaskiwin, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the fourth petition calls upon Parliament not to pass Bill C-250 into law.

DIVORCE ACT

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 I have six petitions to present, but I am only going to present one of them out of consideration for all my other colleagues on both sides of the House. I will save the others for another day.

The petition I am presenting today is from constituents from the city of Prince George and the towns of Mackenzie and Chetwynd in

my riding, and also from Aurora, Ontario. These Canadians are concerned that divorce can have a detrimental affect on children and they note that equal shared parenting roles for both spouses after divorce would obviously be in the best interests of the child or children.

Therefore, they call upon Parliament to pass legislation to incorporate into the Divorce Act an equal shared parenting role for both parents following separation and guaranteed access to grandparents and siblings as dictated by the best interests of the child.

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I have a couple of petitions today in accordance with Standing Order 36. We know that the same sex marriage issue just continues to go along in our country. These petitioners are very concerned about it. They think traditional marriage is the best foundation for families and the raising of children, the institution of marriage being between a man and a woman. The petitioners certainly feel this is being challenged. These petitioners from Edmonton, Alberta, are very concerned and humbly pray that Parliament would continue to believe in traditional marriage.

FREEDOM OF RELIGION

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, my second petition is signed by hundreds of people from my constituency and the city of Edmonton. The petitioners are concerned about religious freedom and the addition of sexual orientation to Criminal Code sections 318 and 319, hate propaganda. The petitioners are concerned. They want to make sure that individuals are able to exercise their religious freedom as protected under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and to express their moral and religious doctrines regarding homosexuality without fear of criminal prosecution.

These petitioners wish to be heard. They are petitioning Parliament and they are probably not convinced that a little amendment to this legislation is really going to help them out.

MARRIAGE

Mrs. Lynne Yelich (Blackstrap, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of hundreds of my constituents across the riding of Blackstrap. The petitioners call upon us, the elected members of Parliament, to preserve and protect the definition of marriage that the House passed in June 1999, recognizing marriage as a union between one man and one woman.

Mr. Gurbax Malhi (Bramalea—Gore—Malton—Springdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of thousands of people in my riding who signed petitions. I am presenting the following petition: we the undersigned citizens of Canada draw the attention of the House to the following; whereas—

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member knows he cannot read the petition. He is going to have to give us a brief summary. I know the hon. member is striving to do just that.

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Gurbax Malhi: Mr. Speaker, the petitioners state that the institution of marriage as being between a man and a woman is being challenged. Hon. members of the House passed in June 1999 a resolution that called on Parliament to recognize marriage as the union of one man and woman to the exclusion of all others.

HEALTH

Mr. Dick Proctor (Palliser, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to rise and present a petition on behalf of people from Cape Breton, folks from Sydney, North Sydney, Sydney Mines and New Waterford who are concerned about the future of Canada's health care. The petitioners specifically request Parliament to adopt the Romanow report on the future of health care in Canada. They ask that Parliament ensure that the next federal budget fully incorporates the proposals to provide adequate, stable and predictable funding so that health care and medicare will be protected for all Canadians in the future.

[Translation]

CANADA POST CORPORATION

Mr. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as you are aware, I am unable to table petitions in the House as the parliamentary secretary, but I can do so as the member for my riding.

Pursuant to Standing Order 36, I have the honour to table a petition from the constituents of West Nova, Nova Scotia. This petition concerns rural route postal carriers and their salaries. The petitioners are asking Parliament to amend subsection 13(5) of the Canada Post Corporation Act.

• (1525)

[English]

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I have the privilege of presenting to the House a petition signed by concerned constituents of Crowfoot, more specifically from the community of Morrin, Alberta. The petitioners call upon Parliament to protect children by taking all necessary steps to ensure that all materials which promote or glorify pedophilia or sado-masochistic activities involving children are outlawed.

I am delighted to present this petition, which reflects the opinion of a majority of Canadians in condemning the creation and use of child pornography.

* * *

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Geoff Regan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if Question No. 233 could be made an order for return, the return would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 233—**Mr. Jay Hill:**

For the fiscal years 1993-1994, 1994-1995, 1995-1996, 1996-1997, 1997-1998, 1998-1999, 1999-2000 and 2000-2001, from all departments and agencies of the government, including crown corporations and quasi- or non-governmental agencies funded by the government, and not including research and student-related grants and loans, what is the list of grants, loans, contributions and contracts awarded in the constituency of Prince George-Peace River, including the name and address of the recipient, whether or not it was competitively awarded, the date, the amount and the type of funding, and if repayable, whether or not it has been repaid?

Return tabled

[English]

Mr. Geoff Regan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, would you be so kind as to call Starred Questions Nos. 238 and 239. I ask that the answers to Question Nos. 238 and 239 be made orders for return. These returns would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

*Question No. 238—**Mr. Guy St-Julien:**

With respect to the Communication Canada Sponsorship Program administered by Public Works and Government Services, what groups, individuals or organizations received funds under the program in fiscal years 2000-2001, 2001-2002 and 2002-2003 to date and, for each event sponsored, what are the names and amounts of the sponsorships, their location—including the name of the federal riding and the province or territory where the event took place—in addition to the date of confirmation of the sponsorship and the event?

Return tabled

*Question No. 239—**Mr. Guy St-Julien:**

With respect to all government departments and agencies, including Crown corporations and quasi- and non-governmental agencies subsidized by the government and for fiscal years 1997-1998, 1998-1999, 1999-2000, 2000-2001 and 2001-2002, what financial assistance, contributions and subsidies were accorded to the federal ridings of Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik, Témiscamingue and Roberval and under what name, to what location and in what amount?

Return tabled

[English]

Mr. Geoff Regan: Mr. Speaker, I ask that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

MOTION FOR PAPERS

Mr. Geoff Regan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Notice of Motion for the Production of Papers No. P-41, in the name of the hon. member for Edmonton—Strathcona, is acceptable to the government and the papers are tabled immediately.

Motion No. P-41

That an Order of the House do issue for copies of all documents and correspondence pertaining to the decision made in 1995 by Revenue Canada to change the way in which it accounts for Goods and Services Tax input tax credit fraud.

Government Orders

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that Notice of Motion for the Production of Papers No. P-41 be deemed to have been adopted?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Geoff Regan: Mr. Speaker, would you be so kind as to call Notice of Motion for the Production of Papers No. P-33, in the name of the hon. member for Battlefords—Lloydminster.

Motion No. P-33

That an Order of the House do issue for copies of all memos, e-mails, letters and any documents with respect to the issue of goods and services tax fraud between the Minister of Finance, Minister of National Revenue and officials at the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency.

Mr. Geoff Regan: I would ask that this Motion for the Production of Papers be transferred for debate. I think you would find agreement from the hon. Leader of the Government in the House of Commons to do so.

The Speaker: Is the minister requesting it be transferred for debate?

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Agreed.

The Speaker: The motion is transferred for debate.

Mr. Geoff Regan: Mr. Speaker, I would ask that the remaining Notices of Motions for the Production of Papers be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES READJUSTMENT ACT

(Bill C-49. On the Order: Government Orders)

September 15, 2003—the Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons—Second reading and reference to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs of Bill C-49, an act respecting the effective date of the representation order of 2003.

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.) moved:

That Bill C-49, an act respecting the effective date of the representation order of 2003, be referred forthwith to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I just want to indicate, as you just have and as I informed the House yesterday, because this deals with the redistribution we are referring it to committee before second reading, in other words, forthwith.

This refers to the representation order issued by Her Excellency the Governor General and proclaimed on August 25 which creates the federal electoral map based on the completed work of the electoral boundaries commissions.

Although proclaimed, the new representation order, as we know, is not yet in force. In other words, the representation order under

which we are operating today was actually made pursuant to the census that occurred 12 years ago.

Under the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act, the proclamation of the order triggers an automatic so-called one year grace period to allow the Chief Electoral Officer and political participants to adjust to the new boundaries. This would make the effective date August 25, 2004.

A number of members of the House and all parties initially approached me and asked if we could accelerate this so-called grace period for the implementation of the representation order.

The legislation is quite simple in design. It has only one clause and does only one thing: it changes the date from next August 25 and brings it ahead to April 1 to ensure that whenever the election occurs, after that date of course, that it will be under the new boundaries. I think most Canadians would agree that if and when we go into an election that, under the principle of representation by population, we should operate under the most recent mapping available to all of us.

I will make these remarks very brief. What we are trying to do here, obviously, is to ensure that those Canadians who are entitled to be represented in their part of the country by seven additional MPs, namely, those areas of Ontario, British Columbia and Alberta, get that as soon as possible.

This raises another subject which I will take a minute to bring to the attention of the House, and that is the modernity of the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act. Once we complete this process, I would appreciate the parliamentary committee endeavouring to study the modernization of that act.

I and a number of colleagues in the House have testified before the parliamentary committee headed by the hon. member for Burlington and with other MPs about making the fine tuning in the last period for the redistribution.

I was amazed when I discussed the issue of changing one village from my riding from another constituency that the person could click on the screen and actually show me the exact effect within two or three seconds of making such a change.

At the time when this act, under which we are operating, came into force 40 years ago it would have probably taken days to calculate and here someone with the click of a finger was able to demonstrate it to members of Parliament in the room where I was sitting. That is how much technology has advanced.

Therefore, I think the so-called one year grace period has outlived its usefulness and could be brought ahead.

• (1530)

[*Translation*]

Second, the chair of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs received a letter from the Chief Electoral Officer, Mr. Kingsley.

Government Orders

In the letter, Mr. Kingsley responded to the committee chair by indicating that if members want a faster redistribution than is legislated, he could accommodate that and even be ready at the end of March.

Consequently, I went back and discussed this with my colleagues on my side of the House. It was agreed that, if the Chief Electoral Officer could be ready at the end of March, why not move the date up to April 1.

[*English*]

By then, of course, I consulted the House leaders of all parties because this is something that had been raised with House leaders initially to see if we could accelerate it in that way. I must say that the official opposition has confirmed that is still its position. For other parties it is a little less clear. The position has changed over time to various degrees depending on what political party we are discussing.

I do not believe this is a partisan issue. Regardless of where one lives in Canada I think all Canadians are entitled to have the next election, whenever it occurs, with the greatest certainty that the principle of representation by population will be adhered to or adhered to to the greatest extent that the commissions have decided.

We are not talking about changing the boundaries. We are not talking about amending the boundaries that were established under the representation order.

These commissions were all headed by judges appointed by the chief justices of the various provinces. We do not intend to interfere with their work. Everything that they have done has been done. Those of us who wanted to appeal that to our parliamentary committee colleagues could do so. Some of us did. I for one did. The parliamentary committee, as a matter of fact, recommended a change and the commission still refused it but them's the breaks, as they say. It does not matter. The point is that I was given the due process that I was entitled to have. After that was done, I had to accept, as I believe we all should accept, what was in the representation order, namely the new boundaries for electoral districts for the next election.

However, as I said, once this process is complete I would also invite colleagues to look at the entire redistribution system to see whether we can modernize it. I have identified one area that I think should be modernized, which is this whole business of having the one year so-called grace period. There may be other provisions we can accelerate.

I know the Chief Electoral Officer should be consulted so he could also indicate to what extent we could make this process trigger as soon as possible after there is a census. I do not believe it is acceptable that we are still operating today on the 12 year rule since this information and that process could theoretically last almost another five years if it were pushed to its ultimate limit. In other words, 16 year old information could probably be the result, as I said, if it were pushed to the limit.

Therefore, why should we not take every advantage that we have to accelerate the process? I believe not to do so, to cause unnecessary delay in all of this, would be unconscionable. I think it is denying Canadians, wherever they live, the opportunity to be properly represented.

● (1535)

[*Translation*]

Perhaps, some people did not like the work done by a commission in their province. Of course, I will not comment on the work of a commission chaired by a judge. A parliamentary committee was asked to examine the recommendations, with a view to possible changes. Public consultations were held. I took part. All this occurred.

In the future, an even broader system can be created if so desired. In the meantime, however, it is important not to do anything that, in my opinion, would adversely affect the borders as they have been defined by the commissions in each province.

That said, once the commissions have completed their work and once the representation order has been signed by Her Excellency, the Governor General, it is our duty from that point on to ensure that Canadians benefit from the changes as soon as possible.

[*English*]

Finally, we should remember that under the representation order these will create new electoral boundaries. Regardless of political affiliation, the sooner we can provide certainty so that existing members, their opponents, other candidates and other intervenors who want to organize politically, as is their duty in a democracy, are able to do so with the greatest certainty as soon as possible.

For all these reasons, I submit this bill. It is a very simple and very short bill. I consulted with other members of the House and I would ask that it be referred to the committee. Hopefully the House will choose to do so as early as this day but, in any case, no later than the end of this week so we can complete this process and tell Canadians that this is what the rules will be for the next election as soon as possible.

I thank ahead of time my colleagues from all parties for their contributions.

Mr. Ted White (North Vancouver, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the minister in his opening remarks on this bill mentioned that the next election should be held under an environment of the most accurate information available to provide representation by population. He also mentioned that we were presently working with information that was more than 12 years old.

Although it is difficult to criticize this bill because it does speed up the process of redistribution as it is now constituted, there really is a problem when we recognize that this 12 year old information means, in effect, that although British Columbia would get two new seats and Alberta would get two new seats, we really are still way behind in terms of accurate representation by population. If we were to use the actual populations today, we should have two more seats in British Columbia right now. It should be four that we are voting for, not two.

While it is difficult to criticize a bill which provides additional representation for western Canada in this place, the one criticism would be that it is 12 years out of date. I will take the minister up on his challenge to provide some suggestions of ways that we could modernize this redistribution act. I will get to that in just a few minutes.

Government Orders

What I would like to mention upfront though is another thing that was just touched on by the minister. There has been widespread dissatisfaction among members about the actual redistribution process and the way that the various commissions handled the process in each province. As critic for that area for my party, I watched the procedure right at the beginning. It was clear that each commission took its own independent way of doing things, so there was dissatisfaction in every province.

For example, in Ontario there were Liberals MPs who lost their ridings completely and I know out west there were Canadian Alliance MPs who lost their ridings because of the redistribution. Out west they assumed it was because there was political interference in the process. I personally do not think there was, although we always have those suspicions, because in Liberal country in Ontario the same sorts of things were happening.

The commissions also were approaching the job in a different way. In the Edmonton area, for example, they tried to change the formula for whether the riding should be arranged in a concentric order or in the spoke system. There was a lot of debate about that sort of thing. In British Columbia there was a lot of argument about whether a riding in the central part of B.C. should be eliminated altogether.

The bill really does not deal with that dissatisfaction, but I think if we were to modernize the entire redistribution act, we could really improve the situation in a very effective way. If the government were serious about trying to address the under-representation in western Canada, it would find a way of speeding up the redistribution process.

For example, thanks to those modern databases which the minister alluded to at Elections Canada, it really is not necessary to have a delay of several years between the time that we take a census and fully implement the redistribution process. It is not really even necessary to use a census. If we really think about it, why do we have to use the census as a starting point for redistribution. The whole process is rather arbitrary after all. Even though we start with the census, we already see that the redistribution commissions can pick and choose where boundaries go. They make massive variations to those boundaries.

For example, in my own riding the first strike was to split North Vancouver into two pieces, because the riding is way too big in terms of the quotient for population. The riding was split and a portion of it was joined on to north Burnaby. I did not object to that because I felt we needed an additional riding in the area, because of the number of people who live in north Vancouver. Eventually after several re-works, I ended up back with the same riding boundaries with which I started.

Here I am back again with exactly the same riding boundaries that will continue on now for at least another five, or seven or ten years before we get a redistribution. Yet the population in the riding is running 17% to 18% above the maximum that is prescribed in the redistribution act. There is something wrong with a process like that. It is arbitrary and it is not tried critically to the census.

Elections Canada already maintains an electronic database of voters and it maintains that database by postal code. Anyone can go

to the Elections Canada website and key in a postal code and find out who the MP is for that area.

● (1540)

There really is no reason why we cannot start with something like the voter database from Elections Canada and make these redistributions on a more frequent basis. If the commissions are rather arbitrary anyway, we do not need that degree of accuracy. It probably would end up being more accurate if it was being done on the basis of the voters list. We could do this redistributions more often and we truly could have real representation by population.

Rumour has it that the Bloc Quebecois wants to hold up this legislation. We in the official opposition will be interested to hear why because frankly the message out west in terms of holding up this legislation is not a good one. I can already hear people out west saying that if the Bloc is going to try to hold this up, here is another case of the Quebec tail trying to wag the federal dog.

Maybe the Bloc members do not care about the relationships with the west but they need to think very carefully about their position in terms of this legislation and the additional representation the west will get into this House once the bill is passed.

We want to see this legislation passed so we can begin the very complicated process of nominations and redistribution of the assets of electoral district associations. Then all this will be coupled with the new political finance bill which in itself is complicated and begins on January 1, wherein electoral district associations have to become registered with Elections Canada.

Here we have this very complex, bureaucratic process of registering electoral district associations in January under the present boundaries and then on April 1 we are going to completely turn everything topsy-turvy, establish new boundaries and all those electoral district associations will have to be re-registered, all the assets accounted for and Elections Canada at the same time will be preparing for the likelihood of an election, perhaps within one month of that occurring.

This is a very complex process. I agree with the minister and so does the official opposition that we need certainty in this. We need this legislation passed quickly so we can begin the planning process and the consultations with Elections Canada to ensure that all the *t's* are crossed and the *i's* are dotted so that hopefully there will not be any problems. It is difficult to imagine that there will not be any problems when dealing with two pieces of legislation at the same time and it is a very new process for riding associations and for candidates.

We hope that Elections Canada is preparing well and that it can cope with unexpected consequences, and there will be unexpected consequences of the boundary changes occurring in consequence with this political financing act.

That having been said, we will not hold this bill up. I think we have a few speakers from the official opposition who will be expressing support for the concept of improved representation by population, probably introducing a few complaints about the redistribution process itself and perhaps providing some other suggesting for the minister on ways in which we could modernize this whole procedure.

Government Orders

I urge other members of the House to support this legislation and the Bloc perhaps to think carefully about its strategy. Let us see this bill go through quickly so that we have certainty for the next election.

● (1545)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that the government has chosen to use a procedure consisting of 10-minute speeches with no questions or comments. We do not have any time to ask questions of the hon. member who has just spoken. I am not going to waste my precious 10 minutes on replying to the claims made by the Canadian Alliance member. Instead, I will explain the Bloc Québécois position on this bill.

First, I will say that the Bloc Québécois is going to vote against Bill C-49 and against referring it to committee, for the good and simple reason that it interferes politically—since the bill was introduced by the leader of the Government—in a neutral and non-partisan process.

Right from the start, I should say that we in the Bloc Québécois do not agree with the final report of the Electoral Boundaries Commission. That does not mean that we contest its legitimacy. As a lawyer by profession, I have had to live with judicial decisions I did not agree with. That is the reason for the transparent system we have, that is, the courts of law, so that issues can be examined and adjudicated.

Therefore we have no reason to doubt the neutrality of the Electoral Boundaries Commission for Quebec, chaired by the Hon. Pierre Boudreault. The commission has made a decision that is not to our liking, but the process was transparent and neutral. We believe it was completely untouched by any political interference.

But the Government is using this bill to interfere and in a partisan way. In the Liberal Party of Canada—and this is not news to anyone—there is a leadership race going on. The current Prime Minister has announced that he will leave. This summer, one of the candidates in this leadership race wrote to Mr. Kingsley, the Chief Electoral Officer, to ask him to speed up the process and, as was left unsaid in the letter, provide him with a window of opportunity to call an election in the spring of 2004.

What is this government's legislative response? It is giving the member for LaSalle—Émard the opportunity to open this electoral window in the spring of 2004. The government will table a bill whereby, in the procedure that was adopted by this House, the new electoral map will come into effect once the last commission tables its report. The last commission to table its report was the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission for Quebec, which did so on August 25, 2003. By law, the new map comes into effect one year after the last commission tables its report. In theory, the new map will not come into effect until August 25, 2004.

However, the member for LaSalle—Émard was given the opportunity to hold an election in the spring under the new electoral map. The member for LaSalle—Émard knows full well that if he called an election before August 25, 2004, there would be seven fewer ridings based on the current map and he would run the risk of

alienating westerners. With the new electoral map, there are two more ridings in Alberta and two more in British Columbia. So he would alienate westerners, who say they are under-represented. They are entitled to their view.

The member from North Vancouver can say what he wants about the Bloc Québécois's intentions, that does not concern us in the least.

● (1550)

We do not have to address the fact that there are two more ridings in British Columbia and three in Ontario. What is totally unacceptable is the question of the demographic weight of Quebec in this new electoral map.

I would remind hon. members that Quebec had 75 seats in 1985, out of a total of 282 in the House. At the present time, it has 75 out of 301. Under this bill, it will have 75 out of 308 with the new electoral map.

What we are saying to the people of Quebec is that this is further evidence proof of how Quebec is marginalized within this system. It is the reason behind the brief the Bloc Québécois members presented to the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission on behalf of their party. The brief pointed out that, given the increase in the population of Quebec, and also to maintain the relative weight of Quebec within these walls, there ought to be 77 seats, not 75. We were not justifying the need for 88, but saying that the number ought to go up from 75 to 77.

We submitted this to the commission in good faith, but our proposal was not retained. Let us not lose sight of the fact that the commission is not the one to decide how many ridings there will be; it is the House, the government, through a legislative process. We are challenging the government to bring in a bill promptly to make the number for Quebec 77 instead of 75.

There is one other reason for our opposition to this bill. Moving the effective date of the new electoral map up means sanctioning the fact that the regions of Quebec will be deprived of a voice within this parliament.

One need only look at regions like Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean, which will lose a seat, or Mauricie, where Champlain is merged with Saint-Maurice. Overall, then, Mauricie is losing one seat. Then there is the North Shore, where Manicouagan takes in part of Charlevoix. The new riding of Manicouagan will encompass an area 58 times the size of Prince Edward Island, which has 4 MPs. In other words, PEI would fit into the new riding of Manicouagan 58 times.

Mr. Speaker, this summer, you were active in your riding, in Cornwall and elsewhere. You met people at the shopping mall, at various parties or municipal pool openings. You met with people who undoubtedly complained to you about the political process or the role of elected representatives, saying, for example, that they never see them and that not enough is known about what they do.

Government Orders

How will a member whose riding covers an area 58 times larger than Prince Edward Island be able to be present, how will he be able to represent his constituents? Physically, it is impossible in some ridings, where there are no roads between municipalities and where winters are long and harsh. Sometimes, people wonder why those listening have lost confidence in politics and politicians. It is because of decisions such as this one to adopt an electoral map like this.

As a party, the Bloc Québécois does not have to endorse implementation of this new electoral map by April 1, 2004. It is out of the question. We will defend our position and defend the interests of Quebec and its regions. It is unacceptable for this bill to be pushed or bulldozed through by this government, as usual.

My colleagues are of the same view, and that is the position of my party.

• (1555)

[English]

Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore, PC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to Bill C-49. I listened to my colleague's speech and there was much in it with which I totally agree.

Frankly, listening to at least parts of the rest of the speeches that members made in the House, on the government's side especially, and from the official opposition, I am surprised at the rush. I question the need to pass this bill in such a hurry. I do not understand what the hurry is.

This is a very short bill. It has one clause. If the government had chosen to do so it could have had only one line in that clause. The government simply could have said that it was convenient and advantageous to the government and no one else in Canada, that people need to vote for it and pass it through Parliament. That is what this is about.

This is not about adding seats to the House of Commons. Whoever thinks it is, is living in a dream. It is ridiculous. It certainly is not about redressing population imbalances in the boundaries of electoral districts. It is not about that at all. It is not about giving increased representation to the provinces of Alberta, British Columbia and Ontario which deserve them and need them. That is not what it is about.

The government would have Canadians believe that it is engaged in some noble effort to guarantee better representation and electoral fairness in this bill. Nothing could be further from the truth.

This is a bill that all Canadians should view with alarm. It is an attack on the democratic process. It is government involvement where governments have no business being involved. It is a blatant attempt to steal the next election, to get the member for LaSalle—Émard to the polls before Canadians can get a look at him. It is absolutely incredible.

The Prime Minister, who introduced the bill, should immediately withdraw this bill and should stand on the record in the House as the last government that the Liberals put forward.

I said at the beginning that the bill was not about adding seats or giving increased representation to those people who live in Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia. That has already been done. That is

how the system works. Those seats have already been added. We do not need to pass a bill in the House to add them. It is done.

In accordance with the Constitution Act and the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act, the various commissions have finished their work and have presented their final reports. The additional seats are there and the new boundaries are there, and under the law these will be in effect for any election taking place after August 25, 2004. What part of this do my colleagues have difficulty understanding?

Let me quote the media release from the Chief Electoral Officer in Canada dated Monday, August 25, 2003.

Jean-Pierre Kingsley, the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada, announced today that on Tuesday, August 19 he transmitted to the Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons a draft representation order describing and naming the electoral districts established by the federal electoral boundaries commissions.

The representation order specifies the number of members of the House of Commons for each province and divides each province into electoral districts. It also describes the boundaries of each district and indicates its name and population, said Mr. Kingsley.

The Governor in Council proclaimed the representation order today. This information will be published in the Canada Gazette on Friday, August 29.

What is the rush? I do not get it. I do not understand this juvenile thinking that is going on in this place. The law requires and provides for a one year period to put in place the electoral machinery for the new boundaries. Much of that work is done by Elections Canada, not the Parliament of Canada, which is supposed to be separate from the Parliament of Canada, but equally important, communities of interest, including political parties, must also close down some operations and begin new organizations based upon the new boundaries. We know that.

• (1600)

Anyone who does not know that has been asleep at the wheel. No member can stand in this place and say that he or she will not have enough time. We have known about this since August 25. They should get at it because it is coming at us.

When Parliament enacted the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act it provided for that one year period of time. Let me quote section 25 in case anybody here has not read it because obviously there are a number of members in this place who need to read it. It states:

Within five days after the receipt by the Minister of the draft representation order, the Governor in Council shall by proclamation declare the draft representation order to be in force, effective on the first dissolution of Parliament that occurs at least one year after the day on which the proclamation was issued, and on the issue of the proclamation the order has the force of law accordingly.

Let me explain it one more time. The government has brought forward a bill to shorten this period from August 25, 2004, when it automatically comes into place. We are going to shorten it by a period of five months. The government says that it is not proposing that section 25 be changed. Instead, it wants to change the rules so the new leader, and let us make no mistake about this, is exempt from the general law.

Government Orders

How did this come about? By a great feat of mental telepathy, it seems. On July 15 the Chief Electoral Officer took it upon himself to write a letter to some Liberals in a completely unsolicited way about some talk in the press about how the member for LaSalle—Émard could face a problem with an early election call run on the existing electoral boundaries.

I beg my colleagues in the opposition parties and in the Alliance Party to take that letter aside and read it. It says that he could face a problem. I think it is the job of the opposition to make sure he faces a problem, not to encourage him somehow to get this thing started five months ahead of when it is going to come in anyway. That is exactly what we are doing here.

Mr. Kingsley offered an unsolicited solution to the sitting Prime Minister. Being ever willing to please, he sent an unsolicited letter to the Liberal member for Peterborough, with copies to the Liberal government House leader, the Liberal senators and the Liberal member for Burlington. The letter reads:

Dear Mr. Adams:

I am writing to you in light of recent—

• (1605)

The Deputy Speaker: I just want to remind the House, and particularly caution the member, that what we cannot do directly we can not do indirectly. I know that it means the person has to take time to make sure he makes the transition from the person's name to the riding, as the case might be.

Mr. Gerald Keddy: Mr. Speaker, you are absolutely right. I was simply reading the letter verbatim and got a bit carried away. It was to the chair of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

The letter reads:

I am writing to you in light of recent media articles concerning the possibility of accelerating the implementation of the new electoral boundaries, effective April 1, 2004.

When considering this matter it is important to keep in mind that the time frame for the new boundaries to come into effect as provided for under the Electoral Boundaries Redistribution Act is one year from the date of the proclamation of the Representation Order. Therefore, any shorter period would require legislative change. Based on the current status of the review by the Sub-committee for Electoral Boundaries Readjustment, it is expected that the proclamation of the Representation Order would be ready by the end of August 2003.

It is a long letter but I urge my colleagues to read it where we have political interference in the Parliament of Canada from the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada, which is totally unacceptable, as it would be unacceptable to have political interference with the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada from the Parliament of Canada. They are two separate entities. We have to assure and ensure that they remain two separate entities.

I want to repeat that this entire debate is not about adding seats to the House of Commons. It is not about redressing population imbalances. It is not about increased representation for British Columbia, Alberta and Ontario which all need the seats. It is about political advantage for the sitting Liberal government, and that is wrong. It is going to come into effect anyway on August 25 so why move it ahead to April? It is wrong and if it passes through the House the government should hang its head in shame.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to discuss Bill C-49, which was introduced by the Government of Canada.

First, it saddens me to see a bill like this one brought in to hasten the implementation of the new boundary redistribution.

Who would dare argue against the people in one region having an equal right to be represented? I do not think that this party has any problems with that.

However, we do with the approach used. It must be remembered that, in 1997, the federal government called an election after having been in office for only three and a half years. Again in 2000, after only three and a half years, it called an election. Normally, in Canadian history, elections are called every four or five years. But in recent history, since 1993, the Liberal government has been calling elections every three and a half years.

Again, an individual who has not even been elected as the leader of the party yet, namely the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard, who is running for the leadership of the Liberal Party, already has the power to change the election date. Earlier, the government, the government House leader said that there was no partisanship, that Elections Canada is there to ensure that no party gets preferential treatment, that this is in the public interest. But at the same time, this is intended to help with the election the Liberals plan to call, perhaps next spring.

I think there was a purpose behind that, besides new technology. The government House leader said so himself, 16 years ago, these issues took 12 months to settle because of the technology.

Believing in democracy also means giving people a chance to object. That is in the act. People can object and challenge the Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission's decision before the courts if they disagree. However, this bill will have the effect of preventing people from doing so.

As you may be aware, in my riding of Acadie—Bathurst the commission decided to take away a part of the riding and attach part of the parish of Allardville and part of the parish of Bathurst to the riding of Miramichi. We are saying to the public and to Parliament that removing this area violates Canada's Official Languages Act.

Mr. Speaker, I would remind you that 14 briefs were presented to the Electoral Boundaries Commission for New Brunswick, all saying that the commission was making a mistake in taking the French-speaking part of Acadie—Bathurst and attaching it to the riding of Miramichi.

Moreover, a petition signed by 2,600 people was sent to the commission, telling it that it was making a mistake. What is more—and this is unprecedented in our country—7,000 postcards were sent to the Speaker of the House asking him to intervene and tell the commission it was wrong.

Government Orders

Then, in answer to my request for an opinion on whether or not the Official Languages Act had been violated in this case, the Commissioner of Official Languages said we were right. In fact, under the legislation, the commission can depart from the application of the rule by 25%; the difference for Acadie—Bathurst was only 14%, while for Miramichi it was 21%.

For a community of interest, the commission may depart from the application of the rule by 25%. Nevertheless, in this case, it said, “No, if we must choose between language and the economy, we choose language”, even though the entire community was opposed. The community of Acadie—Bathurst is completely opposed to the commission's changes. The community does not want any changes.

Some 7,000 people wrote and sent postcards about electoral boundaries: it was unprecedented. And today, when we see the government introducing a bill that will remove these people's opportunity to be heard before the courts, we may well call it another Liberal scandal.

• (1610)

This is scandalous. Its sole purpose is to please the member for LaSalle—Émard.

It is my intention when in committee to call for amendments excluding New Brunswick from the riding shuffle. My reason for doing so is to give the people of Canada and the people of New Brunswick a chance.

The head of the commission has clearly said that the only reason the city of Saint-Louis-de-Kent was removed from Miramichi riding and added to Beauséjour—Petitcodiac was because there was a complaint ten years ago that it was not right to include the francophones of Beauséjour—Petitcodiac with Miramichi.

The head of the commission, Mr. Richard, recognized this for Saint-Louis-de-Kent, and I agree with him. We must be concerned about our minorities and our minority regions. Why, though, need this be done at the expense of the people of Acadie—Bathurst? We are still wondering about this.

We feel that to do so is unfair and wrong. Now the only body that can change the commission's decision will be the federal court. Changing the date for the creation of the new ridings would mean the court would not have the time to bring down a ruling.

The francophones will be the losers in this case, as well as the anglophones. The people of the Bathurst region tell us that if they are included in the Miramichi riding, they will become a minority. They feel that this is unfair to them. It goes both ways. Anglophones and francophones alike feel that they were treated unfairly.

All the mayors in the region spoke out against any changes to the Acadie—Bathurst riding.

The Standing Committee on Official Languages stated that it supported the Official Languages Commissioner. The Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs voiced its opinion and asked the commission to review its decision and leave the riding of Acadie—Bathurst as it was due to the language and minorities involved.

The commission completely ignored the Official Languages Commissioner, the Standing Committee on Official Languages, the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs and the fourteen briefs presented to the House of Commons. Instead, the commission put its faith in a brief presented in Miramichi by Claude Boucher, former Liberal president from the Bathurst region. He told the commission that it had not gone far enough and that it should even include Robertville and highway 11.

If we are included in Miramichi, we would even lose the Bathurst airport, the Brunswick mine and the sawmill. This is totally unacceptable both economically and linguistically. The New Brunswick commission is wrong.

The only recourse left is the court. So, I am asking the federal government not to intervene with the court and instead implement a quick process that will lead to a fair and equitable decision for the people of Acadie—Bathurst and of Miramichi.

Two weeks after the people of Acadie—Bathurst made their presentation, the town of Miramichi stated that it did not even want to communicate in French. How can you expect the francophones of Acadie—Bathurst to feel welcome in the riding of Miramichi when the town council has made such a statement.

As I was saying, I intend to move amendments to Bill C-49 in the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. I want the government's support, otherwise it will indicate real political interference in how Canada's electoral map is defined.

• (1615)

[*English*]

Mr. Gurmant Grewal (Surrey Central, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise on behalf of the constituents of Surrey Central to participate in the debate on Bill C-49, an act respecting the effective date of the representation order of 2003.

The purpose of Bill C-49 is to make a one-time change to the implementation date for the coming into effect of new electoral boundaries. The boundaries will now come into effect on April 1, 2004 instead of August 25, 2004. What is the reason? The reason is that the Liberals want to call an early election. Since 1993 after coming into power, the Prime Minister has called a federal election every time after almost three and a half years rather than after its mandated five year term. I call it political opportunism. That is why the Liberals do not want a fixed date for elections in Canada.

The Liberals call an election at the time of the Prime Minister's choosing, a timing that suits the Liberals politically rather than showing any respect for democracy or any care about the extra costs incurred for frequent elections at much shorter intervals. Early elections are a morally reprehensible waste of resources and an abuse of the system.

The bill today will allow for the continuation of early elections. Canadian taxpayers will have, in effect, paid for an extra election. That is roughly \$300 million that could have been better spent on health care, better policing, defence or even applied to the debt or for other needy causes.

Government Orders

The member for LaSalle—Émard visited Surrey last spring and said that when he becomes Prime Minister he will call an election in the spring of 2004. He was not concerned about western representation that day. It was only later when his advisers saw the trouble it would cause did the former finance minister waver from his plan. He faced a potential backlash in western Canada if he called an election before British Columbia and Alberta gained the two new seats each to which they are entitled under the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act.

Of course, the west is underrepresented, we know that, even after the two seats each given to British Columbia and Alberta. The Liberals know that they risk losing what little western support they currently have. If electoral redistribution does not occur before the next election, they know for sure they will lose that support, but they are going to lose that support anyway.

Who is going to trust them? Their record is written on the wall. We all know about the 13 corruption investigations going on with the Liberal Party. We know about the corruption investigations in various departments, boondoggle after boondoggle, the mismanagement, waste, arrogance. There is even the flip-flops, the broken promises, and the recent flip-flop on the definition of marriage. Member after member voted in support of the definition in June 1999 on the Canadian Alliance motion. Then they flip-flopped and we saw the result yesterday. They are playing with core family values.

The member for LaSalle—Émard wants to call a quick election before his honeymoon with the media and the Canadian public wears out. We can see the urgency for calling an early election.

I hate to get personal and I do not intend to be personal, but let me mention that he is getting older day by day. It is best to call an election before age becomes an issue like it did for the current Prime Minister. One of my constituents told me that the so-called ongoing Liberal leadership race is just about replacing a 69 year old lawyer from Quebec with a 67 year old lawyer from Quebec.

• (1620)

If we were to fix election dates, we would not be here today. If we had fixed election dates, we could eliminate the opportunity for political manipulation and save taxpayers the cost of early and frequent elections called on the basis of favourable polls rather than democratic principles.

Sometimes I wonder who is running the ship on the other side. The wannabe prime minister indicated he is interested in a spring election. The next thing we know there is a bill changing the implementation date for electoral boundary changes. It should come as little surprise.

Senior ministers, including the finance minister, the defence minister, the foreign affairs minister, admit they consult or will consult in the future with the member for LaSalle—Émard on policy decisions. Therefore, I wonder who is running the ship on that side out of the two prime ministers. All this while the Prime Minister says that he is running the government in a business as usual fashion. We know what the usual mean?

The government is playing politics with electoral boundaries. Electoral representation is a component of western alienation, but it is not by any means the only part.

Giving British Columbia two more seats will nothing to diminish alienation. When it comes time for giving, the Liberals forget about the west. When it comes time to take away from the west, then the west is never forgotten. We know about the HRDC grants and the various office closures. Last week it closed the call centre for immigration in Vancouver. It shut down military bases, CFB Chilliwack and others. It has ripped the heart out of the Canadian Coast Guard. On investing in the infrastructure development in British Columbia and the west, this is the only province that does not have four lane freeways throughout. Giving out government or CIDA contracts are all focused only in central Canada but the west and Atlantic Canada are forgotten. British Columbia does not have the required emergency preparedness. Because it is sitting on a fault zone, the scientists are predicting an earthquake any time. How about softwood lumber? The crisis continues and the government ignores it as well as the west coast fisheries. I can give a long list but I know you have indicated, Mr. Speaker, that my time is about over.

Therefore let me conclude. Election Canada is to be commended for its impartiality and its excellent work but surely we are asking too much of Elections Canada staff by having them deliver the new election boundaries five months ahead of schedule.

I have had the honour to represent the wonderful constituency of Surrey Central for two terms. In fact this is one of the largest constituencies in Canada in population. The people of Surrey Central, and particularly the people of Cloverdale, are not happy with the redistribution as it is designed here. They are not being treated fairly as they witness the segregation of their community.

I made a presentation before the procedure and House affairs committee. I commend the committee for the work that it is doing. It had made a strong recommendation endorsing the proposal which I made to it. It was the strongest proposal endorsed by the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs on the Cloverdale issue.

The people of Cloverdale, including the Cloverdale Chamber of Commerce, the Cloverdale Rodeo, which has been the second largest rodeo in Canada for years, and the Surrey Chamber of Commerce, all supported my proposal. Now Cloverdale is segregated and joined with another community which has no direct link demographically or otherwise. It is disturbing the balance in the community. Fleetwood, Port Kells, Guildford, Clayton all had a unique connection, but that community has been segregated.

I will allege here that the Liberals have political motives for calling an early election and for electoral process which they have sped up.

Government Orders

•(1625)

I will be supporting the bill for one reason, that it will at least give a little more representation to the west. However I resent the process and I resent the motive behind it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-49 now before us interferes with what is usually an apolitical process. It is important to understand that the commissioners who are faced with the difficult job of making changes to the electoral map, must do so free from political pressure of any kind. The work they do is extremely sensitive.

Now for the first time in certainly a very long time, if not the first time ever, the government has decided to interfere, in a political and partisan manner, in a process that is neither political or partisan, nor should it be. Under the normal process, at the end of consultations, various stages and even meetings of a parliamentary committee where members can say their piece, a certain period of time elapses before the new ridings come into effect.

As the first bill of this session, the government has announced that the new ridings will come into effect sooner. Those who are listening to us must be wondering, why make this happen sooner when, in the past, the legislature, in its wisdom, decided that it would be best for a certain period of time to elapse before new ridings come into effect?

The reason the government chose to lead off the session with Bill C-49 was to expedite things, to interfere politically in a process that ought to be non-political, in a purely partisan reason, because the Liberal Party leadership race will result in a new leader taking over in November.

Based on when the Prime Minister is expected to leave, the new leader should normally be sitting in this place as the Prime Minister by February. And the new electoral boundaries would not come into force until August. This means that the new Prime Minister would have no choice but to hold an election during the fourth year of the government's mandate, that is to say in the fall or the following spring.

The problem is it is a demanding task to sit in this House, to answer the opposition's questions day in and day out, and to convey to Canadians and Quebeckers what the new man leading the government thinks deep down inside.

The future Prime Minister did not feel like going through this ordeal in the House of Commons. He wants to take advantage of the momentum of the leadership race. He wants to take advantage of the fact that he has remained chronically silent for more than a year about his ideas, his fundamental political ideology, his platform, his directions and his opinions on a wide variety of topics, each one more controversial than the other. He wants to take advantage of this momentum to call an election next spring.

The House of Commons is working on a government bill that interferes in a process that ought to be impartial and non-political, for the sole purpose of serving the partisan and personal interests of the person who will be sitting in the Prime Minister's seat come February. This is an outrage.

That is why the Bloc Québécois is opposed to Bill C-49. We shall not condone this totally partisan move by the government.

Furthermore, with the new redistribution, the political weight of Quebec continues to drop.

•(1630)

Quebec still has its 75 seats, while the total in the House will go from 301 to 308.

I would like the government and my fellow citizens to know that the Bloc Québécois is in no rush to place Quebec in a minority position in the House of Commons of Canada. Efforts to do so began the day the Canadian Confederation was created. These efforts have never stopped and never will.

This is why the people of Quebec need to be vigilant and need to reflect on our future and our political independence.

In the Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean area, the number of seats drops from four to three. This is a region that has been hard hit by the exodus of its young people and by too many economic downturns as a result of such crises as softwood lumber or mad cow. Our agriculture, our forestry, our entire economy is being hard hit, and we sometimes have trouble getting back on our feet after such crises.

The Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean area had sufficient voters to maintain four ridings by remaining within 25% less than the quota. But now, in order to ensure that Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean cannot keep its four ridings, the cities of Chibougamau and Chapais, and the Oujébourgoumou reserve are being taken from the riding of Roberval and transferred to Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik.

Not only is our region experiencing a marked drop in population, but as well the commission is adding to this terrible loss another artificial population loss by taking one whole segment of our region and adding it to another that is more than 400 km away. The treatment being given to Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean is a scandal, and one supported by—I regret to say—the Liberal Party of the riding of Roberval at the time of the commission's visit to the Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean.

The only ones who wanted to see the Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean lose the entire segment comprising Chibougamau, Chapais and Oujébourgoumou are the Liberals of Roberval. Doing so has meant that the remaining population was insufficient to give us any hope of retaining four ridings.

We are therefore doubly afflicted in our region. Not only are we losing one seat, but 25% of our political representation in the federal parliament will disappear like a puff of smoke as the result of a clever little calculation in some little political office, in hopes perhaps of gaining some votes in our region.

The people of Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean are not easily fooled. They understand what is happening right now. They refuse to give up any of their political weight. They know very well that the solution lies in Quebec's sovereignty, when we will no longer have to go through this redistribution of the electoral map, limiting our political weight in this Parliament.

Government Orders

In closing, I would like to speak to the new constituents in the huge riding of Roberval, which now will cover the entire Lac-Saint-Jean area, except the town of Alma. The riding will be almost as large as some Canadian provinces. It will have a very large population. I want to say to that population that the boundaries are not the fault of the local members or of the Bloc Québécois. We do not accept it and we never will.

It makes us more aware than ever of the need to put our political weight to work in the only legislative assembly that is truly our own, the Quebec National Assembly.

• (1635)

At the same time, I can tell the people of the riding of Roberval that, in the name of justice, equality and respect for everyone who comes from the current riding of Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean, I will do something. I will take steps to change the name of the riding from Roberval, which the commission has proposed, to Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean. At least that way these people will feel they have been recognized, thanks to the intervention of the Bloc Québécois and the member who stands before you.

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for New Brunswick Southwest, Finance.

[*English*]

Mr. Joe Peschisolido (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is truly an honour to rise today to discuss Bill C-49 and to speak forcefully for the bill as the member of Parliament for Richmond. Richmond is in one of the fastest growing areas of this great country of ours, the greater Vancouver area, and in one of the fastest growing provinces, British Columbia.

The bill would ensure that Canada's new electoral boundaries are put in place as soon as possible and give the government the flexibility that it needs and that democracy needs to go to the people to ensure that the changing dynamics and demographics of our country are represented.

The bill's concept is simple, but its purpose is essential. It would achieve more effective representation for all Canadians with the least possible delay by ensuring that Canada's electoral map reflects our changing demographics.

The Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons has explained the rationale for the bill, its context, and why it is important to accelerate the effective date of the 2003 representation order. I would like to go through some of the points contained in the bill.

Electoral redistribution is essential to the vitality of our electoral system. It would renew our national electoral blueprint by ensuring that the floor of the House fully reflects the communities we come from and that the voices of all Canadians are properly heard.

The periodic readjustment of electoral boundaries is critical to maintaining this vitality and is necessary if our system is to remain truly representative. Timely redistribution acknowledges a reality

that we all live and breathe, that the Canadian population is dynamic and is in constant state of flux.

We know this from our experience and from the census data that reveals the shift of people moving from province to province, from town to city, and from centre to suburb. Newcomers arrive on our shores, children are born, communities blossom and sometimes disappear. The only constant thing is change itself. We must ensure that our electoral system accommodates and reflects these patterns.

There is no other area in this country which I believe better reflects these points than the greater Vancouver area. The greater Vancouver area will see an influx of three seats which is in keeping with the demographics and not only internally in the province. The interior has lost a seat but the greater Vancouver area will gain a seat. We have also seen people from all over the world come to the greater Vancouver area. My City of Richmond has had an increase in population of 22,000 people since the last census. My colleague across the floor from Surrey will see the addition of two seats as well as shifts all over.

That is why we must move quickly on the bill. We must ensure that our electoral system accommodates and reflects the patterns that I and other members have discussed prior to me rising today. That is why our Constitution wisely requires a redistribution after each decennial census in order to ensure that the electoral map reflects the changing face of Canada and that it does so in a timely fashion. As I mentioned, in 10 years Richmond has seen a population increase of 22,000 people. The greater Vancouver area has seen an increase of at least 40,000 or 50,000 people.

Though often regarded as the rallying cry of American independence, this principle is no less deeply enshrined in our country. Indeed, along with the rights of all citizens to vote in free and fair elections, this is the very touchstone of democracy.

What does this have to do with the bill that we have before us today? A great deal, because we are now in a situation where Canada's new electoral map has been finalized. The independent commissions have done their work. Hearings have been held and decisions have been made. An updated electoral map, presenting a truer reflection of Canadian reality, is ready. All that remains is to bring the new boundaries into effect.

• (1640)

Naturally, some period of adjustment is necessary to enable the election machinery to catch up.

Elections Canada and political parties must orient themselves to the new ridings. This cannot happen overnight, nor should we underestimate the amount of work which would be involved. That is precisely why the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act provides for a grace period of one year.

At the same time, we must remember that the longer that implementation of new boundaries is delayed, the longer we remain with an electoral map that is outdated and not as representative as it could and should be.

Government Orders

The period of adjustment should be as short as is operationally possible. That is why I am gratified that the Chief Electoral Officer has indicated that Elections Canada could be ready to proceed with the new boundaries by April 1, 2004. This is four and a half months sooner than the grace period provided by statute, meaning that Canadians would have an electoral map that better reflects their demographic face much sooner in the greater Vancouver area, in British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario and right across the country.

What does this mean in practice? Why is it important that the new ridings be in place as soon as practically feasible? For one thing, the new electoral map will increase the size of this House by seven members.

British Columbia and Alberta will receive two new seats each and Ontario three. It is important to those provinces that their relative increases in population be reflected in the composition of this Chamber. To do otherwise would work a serious disservice to their citizens. However, even in provinces that do not gain seats, the need to proceed with redistribution as soon as possible is also important.

We can all think of ridings whose populations have grown dramatically since the 1991 census, with all of the challenges that growth presents for the members concerned and their constituents. The situation is not unique. It is not fair to allow this situation to prevail any longer than absolutely necessary. To do so would unnecessarily jeopardize the principle of effective representation that lies at the heart of Canada's electoral democracy.

In its definitive first pronouncement on the meaning of the right to vote as enshrined in our Constitution, the Supreme Court of Canada identified effective representation as the core principle that must guide electoral redistribution. The court's eloquent words remind us of what is at stake. As Madam Justice McLachlin stated:

Ours is a representative democracy. Each citizen is entitled to be represented in government.

Obviously, that is why periodic redistribution is critical. However, as Madam Justice McLachlin continued:

But parity of voting power, though of prime importance, is not the only factor to be taken into account in ensuring effective representation...Factors like geography, community history, community interests and minority representation may need to be taken into account to ensure that our legislative assemblies effectively represent the diversity of our social mosaic.

I am not suggesting that we have reached a point right now where we must act today. What I do know is that implementing Canada's new electoral map sooner rather than later and with the least possible delay is the best means to avoid having a lack of representation here in Canada and diluting the true representation Canadians ought to have in British Columbia, Alberta and Ontario, but also in changes that are occurring within the other provinces.

Let me conclude by asking all members of all parties to join with me in supporting the bill and delivering more effective representation to all Canadians with the least possible delay.

• (1645)

Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick (Prince Albert, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Alliance supports this bill in principle. We believe the technology is there to allow seats to be updated for elections. We should be in tune with those things.

I did want to make a comment, however, on the speech I heard from the Bloc member today opposing the bill. I have a whole lot of difficulty with that point of view. The argument was that somehow Quebec was being left behind because of this bill. I guess in a democracy when representation is based on population we have to ask, is this bill the cause of the problem that we have in Quebec with the representation that the member was talking about? Is this the cause of it?

No, that is not the answer to the question. The answer is quite simply that that province has been preoccupied for the last 20 years with its fight for separatism. During that period of time the City of Montreal has lost its status in the country as our premiere city. Hockey teams have left the province. A baseball team is talking about leaving the province. Quebecers are moving out of that province and the province is at a standstill. But also the governments that have been running that province have been socialistic governments. They have been preoccupied with big government, big spending, interfering in a major way in the day-to-day lives of people. And then they are surprised that their province has not gone anywhere and somehow this electoral boundaries issue is the reason why they are under-represented.

I think they are the author of their own misfortune. They should look in the mirror and they will find the reason why their province has not grown the way it should have. But hopefully they have turned a new leaf in that province and the province will be heading into growth.

For curiosity's sake I checked it out, Bloc members pay \$10,000 more tax than Alberta MPs on their salaries. They pay \$7,500 more in tax than Ontario MPs. A lot of members from the Bloc should be looking at Alberta and Ontario for the answer to their problems for a province that is growing sideways or backward and find a way to get the province jump-started and growing.

I want to raise another issue. We have had electoral financing debated in the House. We are dealing with boundaries now. That is an electoral reform as well. Speeding up that process and something that I feel very strongly about and that has been missing in this whole process is that most democracies legislate when elections are called.

In our country, the government wants to time the market. Liberals want the Prime Minister to have that ability to pick the optimal time for their own re-election. They do not want to legislate that sort of thing. Basically, if the legislation had dealt with this matter, and set terms and legislated the times for elections, we would not be involved with trying to push this through so the incoming Prime Minister would have the option to look at the most optimal period of time to call an election for his own best interest instead of the best interest for the country.

However, like all market timing, it has many perils and difficulties too and I suspect in this case the market timing measures that the government is looking at will backfire.

Government Orders

I want to comment about something that occurred in Saskatchewan in redrawing the boundaries. It is a point of contention that I have with the procedure that was employed in Saskatchewan. The whole process started with a dramatic alteration of the boundaries. The two major urban areas went from eight mixed ridings, rural-urban, to six urban ridings. Contrary to the Supreme Court ruling that basically said rural ridings should be the areas that have lower populations because it is tough to get fair and effective representation in a rural area because of its size and so on. They should have smaller seats in terms of population than urban areas.

• (1650)

This one started out with urban seats having 65,000 people and rural seats having 73,000 and 74,000 people. That is clearly contrary to the Supreme Court decision that dealt with this matter.

I tried to figure out how this proposed boundary in Saskatchewan got going and I certainly hit a stone wall. The member for Wascana, the Minister of Public Works, was an enthusiastic supporter of those boundaries. The member for Regina—Qu'Appelle, an NDP member, was also an enthusiastic supporter of that proposed boundary.

If we look at the last election results, it is interesting to see that both of those members received very poor support from the rural areas. In fact the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle almost lost his seat it was so narrow. It seems rather strange to me that we would create urban seats that fly in the face of the Supreme Court of Canada decision and create rural seats that just do not make any sense.

Fortunately, I have to give the commission credit. Mr. Justice Baynton and the two appointees on the commission looked through all this stuff and listened to the people of those ridings. They went back to the original 14 seats that were only done in 1997. We had a million people in Saskatchewan then and we have a million today. Nothing had really changed in the demographics in the province.

The commission went back to the original boundaries, much to the disappointment I am sure of the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle and the member for Wascana, because they still have to deal with all the rural people who do not particularly like a lot of their policies and stands on things, such as the vote we had yesterday in the House of Commons. I know in rural Saskatchewan that is going to go over like a lead balloon with those folks. They will have to pay for it in the next election. They did not want that.

They wanted to dump all those rural people, get them off their backs and try to get a small urban seat that they thought they could manage their way through for another election. That is not going to happen. That whole strategy on their part is going to backfire and I am really looking forward to that day when the chickens come home to roost for those two members.

• (1655)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sébastien Gagnon (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay, BQ): Mr. Speaker, what can I say about my hon. colleague's remarks. I hope that many Quebecers were able to listen to the debate tonight and see just how out of touch the Canadian Alliance is with the differences and realities in the regions and Quebec.

Of course, I also want to congratulate my hon. colleagues who spoke earlier on this bill, namely the hon. members for Roberval and for Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans

As they mentioned, the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act is non-partisan legislation. And the commissions established in each province are independent.

In our region of Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean, during the readjustment process, we respected the framework of this legislation.

However, the tabling of the commission's proposal in July 2002, led to a definite uprising in this region, because it sought to eliminate one-fourth of all ridings or 25% of regional representation, under the pretext that there has been a decrease of some 7,000 constituents in recent years. However, what are we to understand when one-fourth of our representatives are being eliminated due to 7,000 fewer constituents?

It should also be noted that throughout this process, the entire community rallied together during public hearings. My colleague from Jonquière also circulated a number of petitions among her constituents. We also collected an array of resolutions from municipalities that are indicative of the feelings and the needs of our community with respect to keeping four ridings.

It was an all-out protest movement and everyone was on side. Everything was done within the letter of the law.

On March 28, following public hearings, the commission tabled its report, submitting a few minor changes, but holding to the idea of eliminating one riding.

The four members from the Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean region banded together to oppose this decision. The media also set the tone in saying that the public was against the removal of yet another riding in our community.

Later, I want to point out, still within the framework of this legislation, the four members from the region turned to the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Subcommittee in order to be heard and present the special nature of our region to ensure that the four ridings would be preserved.

My colleague from Roberval and I tried to convince the committee to keep Chibougamau—Chapais in our region. Chibougamau—Chapais is the Oujé-Bougoumou native reserve and has a population of roughly 12,000.

The commission paid no heed to the Chibougamau—Chapais voters and annexed it to the Abitibi riding. That means a population of 12,000 is being taken away from us. Earlier, I was talking about a population of 7,000. The difference we need in order to recover our riding is no longer 7,000, but 20,000, which is totally unacceptable.

This political forum alone has the authority to recommend. We had one last chance for a unanimous recommendation from the House, which would have been good. The Liberal representatives on the subcommittee refused to be won over to most of reasons that were presented by the regional consensus. They behaved in a partisan manner.

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They sabotaged the only forum that would have allowed the Liberal party to show some sensitivity with respect to the regions. The subcommittee report was presented on division, thereby removing any authority to recommend.

The commission stuck to its exclusively numeric vision and eliminated a riding from the Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean region. From a community of interest point of view, this elimination is true gerrymandering.

Throughout the process, the Liberal Party hid behind the arm's length status of the commission not to intervene in support of our region. Now that the axe has fallen, it has no qualms using its power to amend the legislation, solely for electoral purposes.

Supporting efforts made in a resource region to tackle the youth drain and ensure its development was not important enough to be clearly set out in the legislation.

I would like to digress to acknowledge all the efforts underway to counter the negative migration flow in our region. Businesses are closing. Young people are leaving for various reasons, including the lack of jobs.

• (1700)

We will not adopt a defeatist attitude. Just last week, the entire community got together to tackle this problem. This is a first. The unions got on board. Local employers, all our youth groups and the entire community decide to take charge.

Earlier, I talked about a shortfall of 7,000. It was feasible. But making up a shortfall 20,000 is quite another matter.

I chose to live in a region, and I am proud of it. I also chose to go into politics, because I had the desire to pick up the torch from those who have allowed Quebec, and our region, to become a modern society.

You can be sure that, on behalf of the people of Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay, I will vote against Bill C-49. I urge all my hon. colleagues in this House to also vote against it.

Solely for electoral purposes, the Liberal government feels free to amend the legislation. Abiding by the law would give our region a little time to adjust and, perhaps, positively increase our immigration levels.

This is an insult to the rural regions of Quebec, and people will not forget. The Liberals' attitude continues to reflect disconnection from, insensitivity to and a degree of arrogance toward the regions of Quebec.

[*English*]

Mr. Dick Proctor (Palliser, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity to say a few words on Bill C-49, an act respecting the effective date of the representation order of 2003.

As we are all aware, the bill has the effect of speeding up the redistribution of federal electoral constituencies so that the new boundaries will come into effect not in August of 2004, but by April 1, 2004. Under the boundaries redistribution act which was proclaimed last summer, the August 4 date was indeed the date that it was to come into effect.

Whatever the timing, the redistribution process has largely been completed and will increase the number of seats in the House of Commons from the current 301 to 308 with three seats in the province of Ontario and two each in the provinces of British Columbia and Alberta. The extra seats will result in more effective representation for the western part of Canada particularly but also in Ontario, three provinces which are growing more quickly than other regions and other provinces.

However I want to make some observations about the shortcomings that I think accompanied the process of redistribution and some deficiencies in the electoral machinery as we gear up for another election, in all probability an election that will be waged next spring.

It is really important that we underscore the fact that this matter is being pursued with such haste by the government because it suits its agenda, timetable and transition from the current Prime Minister to the prime minister in waiting, the member for LaSalle—Émard, the heir apparent to the Liberal throne.

It is likely that when he is anointed in November, he will want to call an election as quickly as he can after he inherits the chair, whenever it is vacated by the incumbent. I think he is wanting to get that election out of the way because he has been avoiding taking issues on any controversial stands as much as possible and I think he will want to have a cabinet, introduce a budget and go to the people as quickly as he can before people get to know him as well as some of us already do.

To achieve that, the government has gone to the chief electoral officer, Mr. Kingsley, and his staff and wondered aloud if the process could be sped up and could we not get this redistribution process completed earlier just in case the member for LaSalle—Émard, when he becomes prime minister, wants to call an election. The chief electoral officer has responded that yes, indeed, the machinery could be oiled and geared up a bit faster and this could be accommodated. Hence, we have the government House leader introducing this bill that is under discussion today.

With no disrespect to the chief electoral officer or Elections Canada, I think we need to pause and recognize that the situation is not perfect in terms of permanent voters lists that were begun in 1997. I think all of us in this House, regardless of party, have stories about what happened in the 2000 election. I know there were people who I am aware of who waited in line for more than an hour to vote in November of 2000 and finally left the voting hall or wherever the ballots were in frustration because they were not on the permanent voters lists and the lines were long to go through the process of getting on.

I think one could make a pretty cogent, convincing argument that time would be better spent for Elections Canada staff to go out and perhaps consider redoing or going over that permanent voters list prior to another election and prior to the frustration that will inevitably follow because that work has not been done.

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●(1705)

The electronic lists, those permanent lists, may be a way of the future but we certainly have not got all the bugs out of the system. To say that we could have an election in April is a shortsighted view. Perhaps they should be thinking about working on a permanent voters list and doing the fine tuning that I think all of us here would welcome.

It is certainly worth noting that often it is the people who are transient and moving quite a bit from one location to another who are having most difficulty getting on the lists. If people were going out, knocking on doors, finding out who they are, where they live and getting all the information, the provincial health cards and income tax returns, et cetera, that would help an awful lot.

The other thing that is important to note, and I think this is the time to raise it, is the whole matter of redistribution that comes along roughly every eight or ten years and the method by which people are appointed to serve on the committees. They are usually eminent people. I am not here to quarrel about the people who are appointed. I am here to take issue with the way in which those people are appointed.

I am specifically referring to cabinet ministers who are the lead ministers for each of the provinces of Canada. I will use my own province as an example. The member for Wascana is the political minister for Saskatchewan. We have ascertained and he has admitted that he made recommendations for the appointment of two of the three people who served on the Saskatchewan boundaries redistribution committee.

We as parliamentarians need to look very seriously at a situation like that. Regardless of the qualifications of two of those three people, inevitably there is the suspicion of political intrigue and political influence when the appointment system is that way. Incidentally, the third person is appointed by the chief justice in the province.

I do not necessarily today have a better solution to offer to the Speaker and to Parliament, but what we are doing now is deficient. Canadians have a right to be concerned. Inevitably there will be charges when a political minister is seen to be involved in the appointment of two of the three people looking at boundary redistribution. People such as myself and many others will ask if the fix was in before the debate ever really took place or the boundaries were originally laid out.

I will carry on with the example of Saskatchewan. The three member group came out in its first draft with a fairly radical shift. What had happened in the last set of boundary redistributions was a combination of urban and rural ridings in the province. What the three member commission in Saskatchewan attempted to do this time was to separate out and make them either urban or rural. In a province such as Saskatchewan it simply did not work. Basically everyone stood up and told the commission at the public hearings that it did not work. To the credit of the commission, it threw out its original draft. The commission came back and essentially the boundaries in Saskatchewan remained exactly the same as they were constructed back in the early 1990s.

This notion of how boundary commissions are established and the political appointments that occur needs to be carefully considered by the Speaker, by the chief electoral officer and, most important, by the government.

●(1710)

Mr. Clifford Lincoln (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I just want to intervene very briefly to make a suggestion in regard to boundary redistribution.

I really think the process needs to be looked at and changed. We put the cart before the horse. Commissioners sit in a room and present rejigged boundaries, and then it is for us to go before the commission to argue that the boundaries they are suggesting are not logical.

It seems to me that the onus should be the other way, that the commissioners should first consult with the people in the ridings, institutions, volunteer sector, individuals, mayors or borough presidents, whatever they are, councillors and MPs to find out the key issue of identity, community of interests, historical links, and then make boundaries dependent on numbers, up to the 25%.

Instead, they propose, in my case for example, boundaries which are totally illogical, then we go before a commission and they go back to more or less square one, as the previous colleague pointed out.

I think we should look at changing the act to make it far more logical and to insist that there be a pre-consultation before boundaries are set by commissioners. It would avoid so much aggravation and cost of all of us going back to the commissioners and suggesting that the boundaries they have set do not make any sense at all, then them redoing them and in many cases going back to square one.

In closing I would like to say I am a Quebecker. I live in Quebec. I heard the comments of the colleague from Prince Albert. I know it is a debate but I do not think it is helpful to say that Quebec is going sideways and backwards, that we should look to Ontario and Alberta and correct ourselves. I do not agree with that.

I live in Quebec. I like the quality of life there. Quebec is perhaps the essence of what makes Canada a very special place, for me anyway. I choose to live in Quebec. I am a Quebecker by choice. These kinds of comments are not helpful to conciliation among us, the English speaking and the French speaking.

I just wanted to put this on the record, and I regret that this is happening.

●(1715)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Asselin (Charlevoix, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first, I am pleased to do my duty as a member of Parliament today. Since the 1993 election, I have had the honour of representing the riding of Charlevoix. I have done so for three consecutive terms.

The sole purpose of Bill C-49, which was introduced yesterday in the House by the government House leader, is to promote the agenda of the future Prime Minister, the member for LaSalle—Émard.

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An order issued by the commission members during the public consultations—they are judges, after all—stated that the effective date of the new electoral map would be 365 days after the last province tabled its report. Quebec was the last to do so, in August. As a result, the election was to be held after August 24, 2004.

But, in the spring, it also became known that the member for LaSalle—Émard had asked the Chief Electoral Officer, Jean-Pierre Kingsley, to take steps to ensure that everything would be ready for a spring election.

No one thought that this member would use his power as future Prime Minister—he is currently just a backbencher—to compel the Chief Electoral Officer to agree to something that might be to his advantage. Why? Everyone knows that the Liberal Party will hold its leadership convention in November. The member for LaSalle—Émard is considered the frontrunner.

Also, the current Prime Minister announced that he would step down in February. Things are going haywire. A new Liberal leader will be elected in November, and the Prime Minister will step down in February. No one knows who will pull the strings and how Parliament will function.

This masquerade cannot continue much longer. That is why the member for LaSalle—Émard told the Chief Electoral Officer that he wants him to take the necessary steps to allow an early election.

I think this was planned a long time ago. I have here the parliamentary calendar for 2003-04. I invite the public and parliamentarians to review it. On this calendar, the months of February, March and the first two weeks of April are highlighted in yellow. According to the legend, yellow indicates that the days highlighted are “subject to change before October 1, 2003”.

This means that, not only does the member for LaSalle—Émard have the power to dictate the date of the next election in order to promote his personal agenda, but he even has the power to decide how many weeks the House will sit in February and March, before the election. He may even decide that the House is not going to sit. I find it very odd that it is impossible to finalize the calendar for February, March and the first two weeks of April, but possible to do so for the period from the last week of April until December.

This is a disaster. We can see that the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard has used antidemocratic power. What will it be like when the hon. member becomes prime minister? It will be a steamroller. The decision they have just made will have an impact.

We, the members of Parliament, have played a role throughout the commission's work. We presented a brief and we appeared before the commission. Mayors, chambers of commerce, RCMs and regional authorities all demonstrated their opposition to this electoral redistribution.

The Chief Electoral Officer must play a completely neutral role in this matter. We are convinced that this was true at some time, but we are less convinced today because of the role dictated to him by the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard.

I want to thank my staff and all the people in the municipalities and the RCMs who prepared a brief expressing confidence in the democracy of Parliament. As a member, I did, too.

In addition, I would like to thank the commissioners who listened to us. They found that we had some very solid and coherent arguments. The members of Parliament pointed out that in remote areas it is not always easy to meet the voters. The roads are difficult and the voters themselves are spread out. The commission accepted some of the good arguments for our position.

● (1720)

We appeared before the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, which accepted special status for Manicouagan, with its area of 340 square kilometres. This is a huge area, into which Prince Edward Island could fit 58 times over, and PEI has four MPs.

We have no problem with the chief electoral officer reworking the electoral map every four years. What we do not accept is that, on a directive from an MP, the government House leader would move up his political calendar, introduce a bill and try to get the consent of the House.

With this redistribution, I think that the remote areas that need proper representation in the House of Commons are at a disadvantage. We need to be able to speak for our constituents. Seasonal workers need someone to speak for them in the House of Commons. They need to be represented when it comes to employment insurance. So do the farmers, the fishery workers, the forestry workers.

It is not a matter of economics. We know that the new redistribution will allow Quebec to retain 75 ridings. Before there was a total of 289, today there are 301, and there will be 308 seats. Quebec still has its 75 seats. Indirectly, there will be remote areas that will be at a disadvantage because of the problems of accessibility. The only service left in these areas is their MP's office.

In Charlevoix, the North Shore and the Lower North Shore, there is no public service, no departmental offices. In the regions, people must go through the MP's constituency office to obtain services, whether from Fisheries and Oceans or Immigration, to get a passport or to obtain other services normally available in major centres. The constituency office provides services to the community or at least provides all the information people need, people who pay taxes, who vote, who voted for us, and who expect to be properly represented in the House of Commons.

The more we decrease representativeness in the regions, the fewer services there will be in each region. I said it was not a budget issue, but in fact, it will cost the government a lot more. Increasing the number of members and decreasing the demographic and political weight of each region will result in moving and office costs. They will have to pay for infrastructure, staff and a communications system so that the people can at least communicate.

If a member wants to represent his constituents, if he wants to meet them and be available to listen to them and speak on their behalf, this will be extremely difficult unless he intends to act like a senator, which is the opposite of my approach in the caucus. I am a people person. I like to meet with my constituents. I see them more often at McDonald's and Tim Hortons than at Manoir Richelieu.

I really listen to seasonal workers. Unfortunately, we probably will not have the chance to deliver the goods to our constituents.

In conclusion, there is a solution. We have done our work. We know that the Liberal steamroller will go on by. I am calling on the people of Quebec to resolve the sovereignty issue in Quebec once and for all. We will have our 125 ridings in Quebec and we will take care of ourselves.

● (1725)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): The member for Rimouski-Neigette-et-la Mitis. She has only four minutes before it is 5:30 p.m.

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Neigette-et-la Mitis, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I think that four minutes is better than nothing. It is not as great as ten, but I will take what I am given.

I agree with my hon. colleagues who spoke today. It is late afternoon, and new viewers may be tuning in to CPAC. They should know that today we are debating Bill C-49.

It is odd that, at the request of the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard, who has not yet gone through all the steps to becoming the next Prime Minister of Canada, the Liberal government in this House is already going along with a person who will take office in three or perhaps four months.

According to what the newspapers reported over the summer, this is a person who did not even want to face his opponent in a debate, the hon. member for Hamilton East. She sought him out. She wanted to debate critical issues for the future of Canada, but he declined.

It is rather odd to see that he got through to the government House leader, who unfortunately went along with this bill, which is a veritable affront to democracy.

As all my colleagues have explained, a non-partisan process has suddenly become a highly partisan affair in this House. I think that is unfortunate. We may rightly wonder what led the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard to ask for this legislation. What has led the current Prime Minister to grant him this privilege, he who has always wanted his successor to be someone other than the member for LaSalle—Émard? Why is it that he is now helping him along? It appears that he too—like everyone else—is admitting the obvious, that the member for LaSalle—Émard has been holding confidential discussions for a year in his bid to get the job of Prime Minister of Canada, just as he might take steps to acquire a shipping company or an airline.

For him, it seems to be exactly the same process. Thus, he has held talks with the people who are able to give him the millions of dollars he needs in order to move from the seat he now occupies in the House to that of prime minister.

Still, we also can wonder if the member for LaSalle—Émard might possibly be afraid of being in the House. Is he afraid of facing the opposition parties, who will ask him questions and who may be

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able to show the people of Canada that the member for LaSalle—Émard, who is preparing to become prime minister, perhaps does not have any ideas? That would be disturbing; sitting in the House and not having answers to the questions.

It is too bad that my time has nearly run out. Still, I hope that the people will remember that the first move made by the man who wants to become prime minister was completely antidemocratic.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): The hon. member for Rimouski-Neigette-et-la Mitis will have six minutes, when debate on Bill C-49 resumes.

* * *

● (1730)

PARLIAMENT OF CANADA ACT

The House resumed from September 15 consideration of Bill C-34, an act to amend the Parliament of Canada Act (Ethics Commissioner and Senate Ethics Officer) and other Acts in consequence, as reported (with amendment) from the committee; and of Motion No. 1.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): It being 5:30 p.m., pursuant to order made on September 16, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the report stage of Bill C-34.

Call in the members.

● (1750)

[English]

And the bells having rung:

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—St. Clair, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I think if you ask the House you will find that I have unanimous consent for the following with regard to my report stage amendment to Bill C-34.

In the report stage amendment to Bill C-34, I moved the deletion of clause 38 of the bill. Clause 38 is a coordinating amendment to Bill C-34 that replaces clause 7 of Bill C-34 in the case where a section of the Courts Administration Service Act comes into force before clause 7 of the bill.

My report stage amendment should also have deleted clause 7 of Bill C-34 to cover the situation where the section of the Courts Administration Service Act does not come into force before clause 7 of the bill. That way it would have been clear that any point in time clause 7 of Bill C-34 should be deleted.

For the sake of clarity and consistency, I ask for unanimous consent to amend my report stage amendment in order to delete both clause 7 and clause 38 of Bill C-34.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: Accordingly the question, by unanimous consent, is as follows:

That Bill C-34 be amended by deleting clauses 7 and 38.

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● (1800)

(The House divided on Motion No. 1, as amended, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 211)

YEAS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Anders	Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)
Bailey	Benoit
Blaikie	Breitkreuz
Burton	Cadman
Casson	Chatters
Comartin	Cummins
Davies	Day
Desjarlais	Duncan
Elley	Epp
Fitzpatrick	Forseth
Gallant	Godin
Goldring	Gouk
Grewal	Grey
Hanger	Harper
Harris	Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
Hill (Macleod)	Hinton
Jaffer	Johnston
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Lill
Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni)
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Masse	Mayfield
McDonough	McNally
Meredith	Merrifield
Mills (Red Deer)	Nystrom
Obhrai	Pallister
Penson	Proctor
Rajotte	Reid (Lanark—Carleton)
Reynolds	Ritz
Robinson	Schmidt
Skelton	Solberg
Sorenson	Spencer
Stinson	Stoffer
Strahl	Thompson (Wild Rose)
Toews	Vellacott
Wasylcyia-Leis	White (North Vancouver)
White (Langley—Abbotsford)	Williams
Yelich — 75	

NAYS

Members

Adams	Alcock
Allard	Anderson (Victoria)
Assadourian	Asselin
Augustine	Bachand (Saint-Jean)
Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska)	Bagnell
Barnes (London West)	Barnes (Gander—Grand Falls)
Barrette	Bélaïr
Bélangier	Bellemare
Bennett	Bergeron
Bertrand	Bigras
Binet	Blondin-Andrew
Bonin	Bonwick
Borotsik	Boudria
Bourgeois	Bradshaw
Brisson	Brown
Bryden	Bulte
Byrne	Caccia
Calder	Cannis
Caplan	Cardin
Carignan	Carroll
Casey	Catterall
Cauchon	Chamberlain
Charbonneau	Clark
Coderre	Collenette
Crête	Cullen
Cuzner	Dalphond-Guiral
DeVillers	Dion
Doyle	Dromisky
Drouin	Duceppe

Easter	Efford
Eggleton	Eyking
Finlay	Folco
Fontana	Frulla
Fry	Gagnon (Québec)
Gagnon (Champlain)	Gagnon (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay)
Gauthier	Girard-Bujold
Godfrey	Graham
Grose	Guarnieri
Guay	Guimond
Harvey	Herron
Hilstrom	Hubbard
Ianno	Jackson
Jennings	Jobin
Jordan	Karetak-Lindell
Karygiannis	Keddy (South Shore)
Keyes	Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Knutson	Kraft Sloan
Laframboise	Lanctôt
Lastewka	Lebel
LeBlanc	Lee
Lincoln	Longfield
Loubier	MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough)
Macklin	Mahoney
Malhi	Maloney
Marceau	Mark
Marleau	Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
McCallum	McCormick
McGuire	McKay (Scarborough East)
McLellan	McTeague
Ménard	Minna
Mitchell	Murphy
Nault	Neville
Normand	O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)
O'Reilly	Pacetti
Pagtakhan	Paquette
Paradis	Parrish
Patry	Peric
Peschisolido	Peterson
Phinney	Picard (Drummond)
Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)	Pillitteri
Plamondon	Price
Proulx	Redman
Reed (Halton)	Regan
Robillard	Rocheleau
Rock	Roy
Saada	Sauvageau
Savoy	Schellenberger
Scherrer	Scott
Serré	Sgro
Shepherd	Simard
Speller	St-Jacques
St-Julien	St. Denis
Steckle	Stewart
Telegdi	Thibault (West Nova)
Thibeault (Saint-Lambert)	Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Tonks	Tremblay
Ur	Valeri
Vanclief	Volpe
Wappel	Wayne
Whelan — 179	

PAIRED

Members

Copps	Desrochers
Dhaliwal	Fournier
Gaudet	Goodale
Lalonde	Owen
Pettigrew	St-Hilaire — 10

The Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.) moved that the bill be concurred in and read the second time.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Ms. Marlene Catterall: Mr. Speaker, I believe if you ask, you will find consent in the House that those who voted on the previous motion be recorded as voting on this motion, with the Liberals voting yes.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Dale Johnston: Mr. Speaker, Canadian Alliance members will vote nay to this motion.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Guimond: Mr. Speaker, the members of the Bloc Québécois will be voting in favour of this motion.

[*English*]

Mr. Gerald Keddy: Mr. Speaker, members of the Progressive Conservative Party will vote yes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, the members of the NDP vote yes on this motion.

Mr. Jean-Guy Carignan: Mr. Speaker, I vote yes on this motion.

Mr. Ghislain Lebel: Mr. Speaker, I vote yes.

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, I did not vote on the first motion. I would like my vote on the concurrence motion to be in favour.

Mr. John Harvard: Mr. Speaker, even though I was in the House, I missed the vote on the proposed amendment and I would like to be recorded as opposed.

The Speaker: Is the hon. member referring to the previous vote?

Mr. John Harvard: Mr. Speaker, I am in favour of the concurrence motion but not in favour of the amendment.

• (1805)

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

(*Division No. 212*)

YEAS

Members

Adams	Alcock
Allard	Anderson (Victoria)
Assadourian	Asselin
Augustine	Bachand (Saint-Jean)
Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska)	Bagnell
Barnes (London West)	Barnes (Gander—Grand Falls)
Barrette	Bélair
Bélangier	Bellemare
Bennett	Bergeron
Bertrand	Bigras
Binet	Blaikie
Blondin-Andrew	Bonin
Bonwick	Borotsik
Boudria	Bourgeois
Bradshaw	Brisson
Brown	Bryden
Bulte	Byrne
Caccia	Calder
Cannis	Caplan
Cardin	Carignan
Carroll	Casey
Catterall	Cauchon
Chamberlain	Charbonneau
Clark	Coderre
Collenette	Comartin

Crête
Cuzner
Davies
DeVillers
Doyle
Drouin
Easter
Eggleton
Finlay
Fontana
Fry
Gagnon (Champlain)
Gauthier
Godfrey
Graham
Guarnieri
Guimond
Harvey
Hubbard
Jackson
Jobin
Karetak-Lindell
Keddy (South Shore)
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Kraft Sloan
Lancôt
Lebel
Lee
Lincoln
Loubier
Macklin
Malhi
Marceau
Marleau
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
McCallum
McDonough
McKay (Scarborough East)
McTeague
Minna
Murphy
Neville
Nystrom
O'Reilly
Pagtakhan
Paradis
Patry
Peschisolido
Phinney
Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)
Plamondon
Proctor
Redman
Regan
Robinson
Rock
Saada
Savoy
Scherrer
Serré
Shepherd
Speller
St-Julien
Steckle
Stoffer
Telegdi
Thibeault (Saint-Lambert)
Tonks
Ur
Vanclicf
Wappel
Wayne

Government Orders

Cullen
Dalphond-Guiral
Desjarlais
Dion
Dromisky
Duceppe
Efford
Eyking
Folco
Frulla
Gagnon (Québec)
Gagnon (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay)
Girard-Bujold
Godin
Grose
Guay
Harvard
Herron
Ianno
Jennings
Jordan
Karygiannis
Keyes
Knutson
Laframboise
Lastewka
LeBlanc
Lill
Longfield
MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough)
Mahoney
Maloney
Mark
Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
Masse
McCormick
McGuire
McLellan
Ménard
Mitchell
Nault
Normand
O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)
Pacetti
Paquette
Parrish
Peric
Peterson
Picard (Drummond)
Pillitteri
Price
Proulx
Reed (Halton)
Robillard
Rocheleau
Roy
Sauvageau
Schellenberger
Scott
Sgro
Simard
St-Jacques
St. Denis
Stewart
Szabo
Thibault (West Nova)
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Tremblay
Valeri
Volpe
Wasylycia-Leis
Whelan— 194

NAYS

Members

Abbott
Anders
Bailey
Breitkreuz
Cadman
Chatters
Day
Ablooney
Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)
Benoit
Burton
Casson
Cummins
Duncan

Private Members' Business

Elley	Epp
Fitzpatrick	Forseth
Gallant	Goldring
Gouk	Grewal
Grey	Hanger
Harper	Harris
Hill (MacLeod)	Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
Hilstrom	Hinton
Jaffer	Johnston
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni)	Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Mayfield	McNally
Meredith	Merrifield
Mills (Red Deer)	Obhrai
Pallister	Penson
Rajotte	Reid (Lanark—Carleton)
Reynolds	Ritz
Schmidt	Skelton
Solberg	Sorenson
Spencer	Stinson
Strahl	Thompson (Wild Rose)
Toews	Vellacott
White (Langley—Abbotsford)	White (North Vancouver)
Williams	Yelich— 62

PAIRED

Members

Copps	Desrochers
Dhaliwal	Fournier
Gaudet	Goodale
Lalonde	Owen
Pettigrew	St-Hilaire— 10

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Does the hon. member for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia have the unanimous consent of the House to have his vote included as a nay in the vote on the amendment?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed from June 11 consideration of Bill C-250, an act to amend the Criminal Code (hate propaganda), as reported (without amendment) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded divisions on the report stage of Bill C-250.

The question is on Motion No. 2.

•(1815)

After the taking of the vote:

Mr. Alan Tonks: Mr. Speaker, I would like to be recorded as voting in the negative on the last vote.

Mr. Sarkis Assadourian: Mr. Speaker, I would like to oppose Motion No. 2 also.

Mr. John Cannis: I voted in favour, Mr. Speaker.

[Translation]

The House divided on Motion No. 2, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 213)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy
Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)
Barnes (Gander—Grand Falls)
Bonin
Breitkreuz
Cadman
Cannis
Casson
Clark
Day
Duncan
Epp
Fontana
Gallant
Gouk
Grey
Hanger
Harris
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
Hinton
Johnston
Keddy (South Shore)
Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough)
Mark
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
McGuire
McTeague
Merrifield
O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)
Obhrai
Penson
Peschisolido
Rajotte
Reynolds
Schellenberger
Skelton
Sorenson
Spencer
Strahl
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Vellacott
Wappel
White (Langley—Abbotsford)
Williams

NAYS

Members

Abbott
Anders
Bailey
Benoit
Borotsik
Burton
Calder
Casey
Chatters
Cummins
Doyle
Elley
Fitzpatrick
Forseth
Goldring
Grewal
Guarnieri
Harper
Hill (MacLeod)
Hilstrom
Jaffer
Karygiannis
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni)
Malhi
Marleau
Mayfield
McNally
Meredith
Mills (Red Deer)
O'Reilly
Pallister
Peric
Pillitteri
Reid (Lanark—Carleton)
Ritz
Schmidt
Solberg
Speller
Stinson
Thompson (Wild Rose)
Toews
Volpe
Wayne
White (North Vancouver)
Yelich— 91
Adams
Anderson (Victoria)
Asselin
Bachand (Saint-Jean)
Bagnell
Barrette
Bélangier
Bennett
Bigras
Blaikie
Bonwick
Bourgeois
Brisson
Bryden
Byrne
Caplan
Carignan
Catterall
Chamberlain
Coderre
Comartin
Cullen
Dalphond-Guiral
DeVillers
Dromisky
Duceppe
Eggleton
Alcock
Assadourian
Augustine
Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska)
Barnes (London West)
Bélair
Bellemare
Bergeron
Binet
Blondin-Andrew
Boudria
Bradshaw
Brown
Bulte
Caccia
Cardin
Carroll
Cauchon
Charbonneau
Collenette
Crête
Cuzner
Davies
Dion
Drouin
Easter
Eyking

Private Members' Business

Finlay
Frulla
Gagnon (Champlain)
Gagnon (Québec)
Girard-Bujold
Godin
Grose
Guimond
Harvey
Hubbard
Jackson
Jobin
Karetak-Lindell
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Kraft Sloan
Lancôt
Lee
Lincoln
Macklin
Maloney
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Masse
McDonough
Ménard
Mitchell
Nault
Normand
Pacetti
Paradis
Patry
Phinney
Plamondon
Proctor
Redman
Regan
Robinson
Rock
Saada
Scherrer
Sgro
Simard
St-Julien
Steckle
Stoffer
Telegdi
Thibeault (Saint-Lambert)
Tremblay
Valeri
Wasylcyia-Leis

Folco
Fry
Gagnon (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay)
Gauthier
Godfrey
Graham
Guay
Harvard
Herron
Ianno
Jennings
Jordan
Keyes
Knutson
Laframboise
LeBlanc
Lill
Loubier
Mahoney
Marceau
Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
McCallum
McLellan
Minna
Murphy
Neville
Nystrom
Paquette
Parrish
Peterson
Picard (Drummond)
Price
Proulx
Reed (Halton)
Robillard
Rocheleau
Roy
Sauvageau
Scott
Shepherd
St-Jacques
St. Denis
Stewart
Szabo
Thibault (West Nova)
Tonks
Ur
Vanclief
Whelan — 152

Casey
Chamberlain
Clark
Day
Doyle
Efford
Epp
Fontana
Gallant
Gouk
Grey
Hanger
Harris
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
Hinton
Johnston
Keddy (South Shore)
Lunn (Saenich—Gulf Islands)
MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough)
Mark
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
McNally
Meredith
Mills (Red Deer)
Obhrai
Penson
Peschisolido
Pillitteri
Reed (Halton)
Reynolds
Savoy
Schmidt
Skelton
Sorenson
Spencer
Stoffer
Thompson (Wild Rose)
Toews
Volpe
Wayne
White (North Vancouver)
Yelich — 101

Casson
Chatters
Cummins
Desjarlais
Duncan
Elley
Fitzpatrick
Forseth
Goldring
Grewal
Guarnieri
Harper
Hill (MacLeod)
Hilstrom
Jaffer
Karygiannis
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni)
Malhi
Marleau
Mayfield
McTeague
Merrifield
O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)
Pallister
Peric
Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)
Rajotte
Reid (Lanark—Carleton)
Ritz
Schellenberger
Serré
Solberg
Speller
Stinson
Strahl
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Vellacott
Wappel
White (Langley—Abbotsford)
Williams

NAYS

Members

Adams
Anderson (Victoria)
Asselin
Bachand (Saint-Jean)
Barnes (London West)
Bélanger
Bennett
Bigras
Blaikie
Bonwick
Bourgeois
Brown
Bulte
Caccia
Cardin
Carroll
Cauchon
Coderre
Comartin
Cuzner
Davies
Dion
Drouin
Easter
Eyking
Folco
Fry
Gagnon (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay)
Gauthier
Godfrey
Graham
Guay
Harvard
Herron
Ianno
Jennings
Jordan
Alcock
Assadourian
Augustine
Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska)
Barrette
Bellemare
Bergeron
Binet
Blondin-Andrew
Boudria
Bradshaw
Bryden
Byrne
Caplan
Carignan
Catterall
Charbonneau
Collenette
Crête
Dalphond-Guiral
DeVillers
Dromisky
Duceppe
Eggleton
Finlay
Frulla
Gagnon (Champlain)
Gagnon (Québec)
Girard-Bujold
Godin
Grose
Guimond
Harvey
Hubbard
Jackson
Jobin
Karetak-Lindell

PAIRED

Members

Copps
Dhaliwal
Gaudet
Lalonde
Pettigrew

Desrochers
Fournier
Goodale
Owen
St-Hilaire — 10

The Speaker: I declare Motion No. 2 lost.

The next division is on Motion No. 3.

● (1825)

The House divided on Motion No. 3, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 214)

YEAS

Members

Abbott
Anders
Bagnell
Barnes (Gander—Grand Falls)
Benoit
Bonin
Breitkreuz
Burton
Calder

Ablonczy
Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)
Bailey
Bélair
Bertrand
Borotsik
Brisson
Cadman
Cannis

Private Members' Business

Keyes	Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Knutson	Kraft Sloan
Laframboise	Lancôt
LeBlanc	Lee
Lill	Lincoln
Loubier	Macklin
Mahoney	Maloney
Marceau	Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Martin (LaSalle—Émard)	Masse
McCallum	McDonough
McLellan	Ménard
Minna	Mitchell
Murphy	Nault
Neville	Normand
Nystrom	O'Reilly
Pacetti	Paquette
Paradis	Parrish
Patry	Peterson
Phinney	Picard (Drummond)
Plamondon	Price
Proctor	Proulx
Redman	Robillard
Robinson	Rocheleau
Rock	Roy
Saada	Sauvageau
Scherrer	Scott
Sgro	Shepherd
Simard	St-Jacques
St-Julien	St. Denis
Steckle	Stewart
Szabo	Telegdi
Thibault (West Nova)	Thibault (Saint-Lambert)
Tonks	Tremblay
Ur	Valeri
Vanclief	Wasylycia-Leis
Whelan — 145	

PAIRED

Members

Copps	Desrochers
Dhaliwal	Fournier
Gaudet	Goodale
Lalonde	Owen
Pettigrew	St-Hilaire — 10

The Speaker: I declare Motion No. 3 lost.

[*English*]

Mr. Svend Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP) moved that the bill, as amended, be concurred in.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

• (1835)

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

*(Division No. 215)***YEAS**

Members

Adams	Alcock
Anderson (Victoria)	Asselin
Augustine	Bachand (Saint-Jean)
Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska)	Bagnell
Bames (London West)	Barrette
Bélanger	Bennett
Bergeron	Bigras
Binet	Blaikie
Blondin-Andrew	Bonwick
Borotsik	Boudria
Bourgeois	Bradshaw
Brison	Brown
Bulte	Byrne
Caccia	Caplan
Cardin	Carignan
Carroll	Catterall
Cauchon	Charbonneau
Clark	Coderre
Collenette	Comartin
Crête	Cullen
Cuzner	Dalphond-Guiral
Davies	Desjarlais
DeVillers	Dion
Dromisky	Drouin
Duceppe	Easter
Eggleton	Eyking
Finlay	Folco
Fontana	Frulla
Fry	Gagnon (Champlain)
Gagnon (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay)	Gagnon (Québec)
Gauthier	Girard-Bujold
Godfrey	Godin
Graham	Grose
Guarnieri	Guay
Guimond	Harvard
Harvey	Herron
Ianno	Jennings
Jobin	Jordan
Keddy (South Shore)	Keyes
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)	Knutson
Kraft Sloan	Laframboise
Lancôt	LeBlanc
Lee	Lill
Lincoln	Loubier
MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough)	Macklin
Mahoney	Maloney
Marceau	Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Martin (LaSalle—Émard)	Masse
McCallum	McDonough
McLellan	Ménard
Minna	Mitchell
Murphy	Nault
Neville	Normand
Nystrom	Paquette
Paradis	Parrish
Patry	Peterson
Phinney	Picard (Drummond)
Plamondon	Price
Proctor	Proulx
Redman	Regan
Robillard	Robinson
Rocheleau	Rock
Roy	Saada
Sauvageau	Scherrer
Scott	Sgro
Shepherd	Simard
St-Jacques	St. Denis
Stewart	Stoffer
Telegdi	Thibault (West Nova)
Thibault (Saint-Lambert)	Tremblay
Vanclief	Wasylycia-Leis
Whelan — 143	

NAYS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
--------	----------

Private Members' Business

Anders
Assadourian
Barnes (Gander—Grand Falls)
Bellemare
Bertrand
Breitkreuz
Burton
Calder
Casey
Chamberlain
Cummins
Doyle
Efford
Epp
Forseth
Goldring
Grewal
Hanger
Harris
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
Hinton
Jackson
Johnston
Karygiannis
Lastewka
Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
Malhi
Marleau
Mayfield
McGuire
McNally
Meredith
Mills (Red Deer)
O'Reilly
Pacetti
Penson
Peschisolido
Pillitteri
Reed (Halton)
Reynolds
Savoy
Schmidt
Skelton
Sorenson
Spencer
Steckle
Strahl
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Toews
Ur
Vellacott
Wappel
White (Langley—Abbotsford)
Williams

Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)
Bailey
Bélair
Benoit
Bonin
Bryden
Cadman
Cannis
Casson
Chatters
Day
Duncan
Elley
Fitzpatrick
Gallant
Gouk
Grey
Harper
Hill (Macleod)
Hilstrom
Hubbard
Jaffer
Karetak-Lindell
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Longfield
Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni)
Mark
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
McCormick
McKay (Scarborough East)
McTeague
Merrifield
O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)
Obhrai
Pallister
Peric
Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)
Rajotte
Reid (Lanark—Carleton)
Ritz
Schellenberger
Serré
Solberg
Speller
St-Julien
Stinson
Szabo
Thompson (Wild Rose)
Tonks
Valeri
Volpe
Wayne
White (North Vancouver)
Yelich — 110

PAIRED

Members

Copps
Dhaliwal
Gaudet
Lalonde
Pettigrew

Desrochers
Fournier
Goodale
Owen
St-Hilaire — 10

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Svend Robinson moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

Ms. Marlene Catterall: Mr. Speaker, I realize this is unusual during private members' business, but I have had some requests from both sides of the House to see whether there might be consent, given this is now the report on third reading, to apply the vote from the previous vote.

• (1840)

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And more than five members having risen:

• (1845)

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

*(Division No. 216)***YEAS**

Members

Adams
Asselin
Bachand (Saint-Jean)
Bagnell
Barrette
Bennett
Bigras
Blaikie
Bonwick
Boudria
Bradshaw
Brown
Byrne
Caplan
Carignan
Catterall
Charbonneau
Coderre
Comartin
Cullen
Dalphond-Guiral
Desjarlais
Dion
Drouin
Easter
Eyking
Folco
Frulla
Gagnon (Champlain)
Gagnon (Québec)
Girard-Bujold
Godin
Grose
Guay
Harvard
Herron
Jennings
Jordan
Keys
Knutson
Laframboise
LeBlanc
Lill
Loubier
Macklin

Alcock
Augustine
Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska)
Barnes (London West)
Bélanger
Bergeron
Binet
Blondin-Andrew
Borotsik
Bourgeois
Brison
Bulte
Caccia
Cardin
Carroll
Cauchon
Clark
Collenette
Crête
Cuzner
Davies
DeVillers
Dromisky
Duceppe
Eggleton
Finlay
Fontana
Fry
Gagnon (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay)
Gauthier
Godfrey
Graham
Guarnieri
Guimond
Harvey
Ianno
Jobin
Keddy (South Shore)
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Kraft Sloan
Lancôt
Lee
Lincoln
MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough)
Mahoney

Private Members' Business

Maloney
 Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
 Masse
 McDonough
 Ménard
 Mitchell
 Nault
 Normand
 Paquette
 Parrish
 Peterson
 Picard (Drummond)
 Price
 Proulx
 Regan
 Robinson
 Rock
 Saada
 Scott
 Shepherd
 St-Jacques
 Stewart
 Telegdi
 Thibault (Saint-Lambert)
 Vanclief
 Whelan — 141

Marceau
 Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
 McCallum
 McLellan
 Minna
 Murphy
 Neville
 Nystrom
 Paradis
 Patry
 Phinney
 Plamondon
 Proctor
 Redman
 Robillard
 Rocheleau
 Roy
 Sauvageau
 Sgro
 Simard
 St. Denis
 Stoffer
 Thibault (West Nova)
 Tremblay
 Wasylycia-Leis

NAYS

Members

Abbott
 Anders
 Assadourian
 Barnes (Gander—Grand Falls)
 Bellemare
 Bertrand
 Breitzkreuz
 Burton
 Calder
 Casey
 Chamberlain
 Cummins
 Doyle
 Efford
 Epp
 Forseth
 Goldring
 Grewal
 Hanger
 Harris
 Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
 Hinton
 Jackson
 Johnston
 Karygiannis
 Lastewka
 Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
 Malhi
 Marleau
 Mayfield
 McGuire
 McNally
 Meredith
 Mills (Red Deer)
 O'Reilly
 Pacetti
 Penson
 Peschisolido
 Pillitteri
 Reed (Halton)
 Reynolds
 Savoy
 Schmidt
 Skelton
 Sorenson
 Spencer
 Steckle
 Strahl
 Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
 Toews
 Ur
 Vellacott
 Wappel

Ablonczy
 Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)
 Bailey
 Bélair
 Benoit
 Bonin
 Bryden
 Cadman
 Cannis
 Casson
 Chatters
 Day
 Duncan
 Elley
 Fitzpatrick
 Gallant
 Gouk
 Grey
 Harper
 Hill (Macleod)
 Hilstrom
 Hubbard
 Jaffer
 Karetak-Lindell
 Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
 Longfield
 Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni)
 Mark
 Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
 McCormick
 McKay (Scarborough East)
 McTeague
 Merrifield
 O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)
 Obhrai
 Pallister
 Peric
 Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)
 Rajotte
 Reid (Lanark—Carleton)
 Ritz
 Schellenberger
 Serré
 Solberg
 Speller
 St-Julien
 Stinson
 Szabo
 Thompson (Wild Rose)
 Tonks
 Valeri
 Volpe
 Wayne

White (Langley—Abbotsford)
 Williams

White (North Vancouver)
 Yelich — 110

PAIRED

Members

Copps
 Dhaliwal
 Gaudet
 Lalonde
 Pettigrew

Desrochers
 Fournier
 Goodale
 Owen
 St-Hilaire — 10

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.
 (Bill read the third time and passed)

* * *

● (1850)

COMMUNITY ACTIVITY SUPPORT FUND

The House resumed from September 15 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on Motion No. 393 under private members' business.

● (1855)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 217*)

YEAS

Members

Assadourian
 Bachand (Saint-Jean)
 Barnes (Gander—Grand Falls)
 Bélair
 Bergeron
 Bigras
 Bonin
 Bourgeois
 Bulte
 Cardin
 Charbonneau
 Comartin
 Cullen
 Dalphond-Guiral
 Doyle
 Efford
 Gagnon (Champlain)
 Gagnon (Québec)
 Girard-Bujold
 Guay
 Jennings
 Karygiannis
 Laframboise
 Lebel
 Lincoln
 MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough)
 Mark
 Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
 Ménard
 Normand
 Pacetti
 Peric
 Pillitteri
 Price
 Proulx
 Roy
 Sauvageau
 St-Jacques
 Stoffer
 Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
 Wasylycia-Leis

Asselin
 Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska)
 Barrette
 Bélanger
 Bertrand
 Blaikie
 Borotsik
 Brison
 Cannis
 Carignan
 Clark
 Crête
 Cuzner
 Davies
 Duceppe
 Frulla
 Gagnon (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay)
 Gauthier
 Godin
 Guimond
 Jobin
 Keddy (South Shore)
 Lanctôt
 LeBlanc
 Loubier
 Marceau
 Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
 McGuire
 Neville
 Nystrom
 Paquette
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 Plamondon
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Abbott
Adams
Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)
Bagnell
Bellemare
Benoit
Bonwick
Bradshaw
Brown
Burton
Caccia
Calder
Carroll
Cauchon
Chatters
Cummins
Desjarlais
Dion
Drouin
Easter
Elley
Eyking
Fitzpatrick
Fontana
Fry
Godfrey
Grewal
Grose
Harper
Harvard
Herron
Hill (Macleod)
Hinton
Ianno
Jaffer
Jordan
Keyes
Knutson
Lee
Longfield
Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni)
Mahoney
Maloney
Martin (LaSalle—Énard)
Mayfield
McCormick
McKay (Scarborough East)
McNally
Merrifield
Minna
Nault
Obhrai
Penson
Peterson
Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)
Redman
Regan
Reynolds
Robillard
Rock
Schmidt
Sgro
Simard
Solberg
Speller
St. Denis
Stewart
Strahl
Telegdi
Thompson (Wild Rose)
Tonks
Valeri
Vellacott
Wappel
White (Langley—Abbotsford)
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Anders
Augustine
Bailey
Bennett
Blondin-Andrew
Boudria
Breitkreuz
Bryden
Byrne
Cadman
Caplan
Casson
Chamberlain
Collenette
Day
DeVillers
Dromisky
Duncan
Eggleton
Epp
Finlay
Folco
Forseth
Gallant
Goldring
Grey
Hanger
Harris
Harvey
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
Hilstrom
Hubbard
Jackson
Johnston
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Kraft Sloan
Lill
Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
Macklin
Malhi
Marleau
Masse
McCallum
McDonough
McLellan
Meredith
Mills (Red Deer)
Mitchell
O'Reilly
Pallister
Peschisolido
Phinney
Rajotte
Reed (Halton)
Reid (Lanark—Carleton)
Ritz
Rocheleau
Savoy
Scott
Shepherd
Skelton
Sorenson
Spencer
Steckle
Stinson
Szabo
Thibault (West Nova)
Toews
Ur
Vanclief
Volpe
Whelan
White (North Vancouver)

PAIRED

Members

Copps
Dhaliwal
Gaudet
Lalonde
Petigrew

Desrochers
Fournier
Goodale
Owen
St-Hilaire— 10

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

* * *

[*English*]

CHIEF ACTUARY ACT

The House resumed from September 16 consideration of the motion that Bill C-421, an act respecting the establishment of the Office of the Chief Actuary of Canada and to amend other acts in consequence thereof, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Tuesday, September 16, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-421 under private members' business.

● (1910)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 218*)

YEAS

Members

Abbott
Anders
Asselin
Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska)
Barnes (Gander—Grand Falls)
Bergeron
Blaikie
Bourgeois
Brisson
Cadman
Casson
Clark
Crête
Dalphond-Guiral
Day
Doyle
Elley
Fitzpatrick
Gagnon (Québec)
Gagnon (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay)
Gauthier
Godin
Gouk
Grey
Guimond
Harper
Herron
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
Hinton
Johnston
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Lancôt
Loubier
Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni)
Mark
Masse
McDonough
Ménard

Ablonczy
Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)
Bachand (Saint-Jean)
Bailey
Benoit
Bigras
Borotsik
Breitkreuz
Burton
Cardin
Chatters
Comartin
Cummins
Davies
Desjarlais
Duncan
Epp
Forseth
Gagnon (Champlain)
Gallant
Girard-Bujold
Goldring
Grewal
Guay
Hanger
Harris
Hill (Macleod)
Hilstrom
Jaffer
Keddy (South Shore)
Laframboise
Lill
Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
Marceau
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Mayfield
McNally
Meredith

Adjournment Debate

Merrifield	Mills (Red Deer)
Obhrai	Pacetti
Pallister	Paquette
Penson	Picard (Drummond)
Plamondon	Proctor
Rajotte	Reid (Lanark—Carleton)
Reynolds	Ritz
Rocheleau	Roy
Sauvageau	Schellenberger
Schmidt	Shepherd
Skelton	Solberg
Sorenson	Spencer
Steckle	Stinson
Stoffer	Strahl
Szabo	Telegdi
Thompson (Wild Rose)	Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Toews	Vellacott
Wappel	Wasylycia-Leis
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NAYS

Members

Adams	Assadourian
Augustine	Bagnell
Barrette	Bélair
Bélangier	Bellemare
Bertrand	Binet
Blondin-Andrew	Boudria
Bradshaw	Brown
Bryden	Bulte
Byrne	Caccia
Calder	Cannis
Caplan	Carignan
Carroll	Cauchon
Chamberlain	Charbonneau
Collette	Cullen
Cuzner	DeVillers
Dion	Dromisky
Drouin	Easter
Eggleton	Eyking
Finlay	Folco
Frulla	Fry
Godfrey	Grose
Harvard	Harvey
Hubbard	Ianno
Jackson	Jobin
Jordan	Karetak-Lindell
Karygiannis	Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Knutson	Kraft Sloan
LeBlanc	Lee
Lincoln	Macklin
Mahoney	Malhi
Maloney	Marleau
Martin (LaSalle—Émard)	McCormick
McGuire	McLellan
Minna	Mitchell
Murphy	Nault
Neville	O'Reilly
Peschisolido	Peterson
Phinney	Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)
Price	Proulx
Redman	Reed (Halton)
Regan	Robillard
Saada	Savoy
Scott	Sgro
Simard	Speller
St-Jacques	St. Denis
Stewart	Thibault (West Nova)
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Ur	Valeri
Vanclief	Whelan— 98

PAIRED

Members

Copps	Desrochers
Dhaliwal	Fournier
Gaudet	Goodale
Lalonde	Owen
Pettigrew	St-Hilaire— 10

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Finance.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

[*English*]

The Speaker: I wish to inform the House that because of the delay there will be no private members' business today. I hope nobody is upset by that. Accordingly, the order will be rescheduled for a subsequent sitting.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[*English*]

FINANCE

Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, PC): Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight on an issue regarding banking procedures and charges that are levied upon businesses across the country by a company called Moneris. I originally put this question to the Minister of Finance on June 11 and I do appreciate the opportunity to expand on that question.

By way of explanation, what it really comes down to is that a company called Moneris was set up to skirt banking bylaws. The Bank of Montreal, now called BMO, and the Royal Bank, RBC, set up Moneris to skirt Canadian card rules that bar banks from issuing both MasterCard and Visa cards and processors from handling both brands.

Again, by way of explanation, Moneris Solutions Corp. which was set up in December 2001, can now process both Visa and MasterCard accounts because of the fifty-fifty partnership between the two of them. The Bank of Montreal issues cards and acquires merchants under the Visa brand while the Royal Bank of Canada does so under the MasterCard brand.

In accordance with the Canadian Bank Card Association's non-duality bylaws and according to its interpretation the banks are not combining their card portfolios. They are simply funnelling the merchant processing business to Moneris. The problem is that a couple of years ago they had over 300,000 clients, businesses with which they did business, in Canada and about 30,000 in the U.S. Obviously those are two Canadian banks for some customers in the U.S. However they are overcharging their clients.

I received a note on this from a former member of this House, in fact the former chairman of the finance committee, by the name of Murray Dorin. We sat with him in the House. He is well qualified in that capacity. He has taken these people to task on this. He is asking Moneris to review this situation and to refund the overcharged amount, which has happened routinely. We are not just talking about a few dollars; we are talking hundreds of thousands of dollars spread across many companies. That is not fair. Basically it puts small companies at the mercy of big companies.

Adjournment Debate

What has happened in this case, when the Royal Bank and the Bank of Montreal hived off this business and set up Moneris, they basically set up a company that would not be as profitable under a wider range of financial services. In other words, this corporation is now extracting an excessive amount of charges from companies when their contractual agreement says that this should not happen. In other words, they are being overcharged.

We want the finance committee to take a look at this. We would like the Minister of Finance to take a serious look at these overcharges. This is wrong and we should not have to stand in the House of Commons to get action on behalf of a company that acknowledges some wrongdoing but has failed to compensate its clients for overcharging them over a period of years.

We hope we will see some action by the government and we look forward to a response by the minister.

●(1915)

Ms. Judy Sgro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity tonight to respond to the request from the member for New Brunswick Southwest that the Minister of Finance recommend that the Standing Committee on Finance examine the pricing practices of Moneris Solutions.

Let me begin by stating that the federal government does not generally regulate the pricing of financial services. We believe that Canadians are best served in an environment where financial services providers must compete for business and where consumers have sufficient knowledge to make informed choices. Vibrant competition will not only generate fair pricing of financial services, but will also ensure that Canada's financial sector remains dynamic and innovative.

I would like to note for the hon. member that Moneris is not the only company offering credit card processing services to businesses in Canada. In fact, similar services are provided by several other companies. As such, businesses can shop around to find the service provider that best suits their needs.

I would also like to note that the Competition Bureau is responsible for ensuring competitive markets through its administration and enforcement of the Competition Act, and has a variety of tools at its disposal to address anti-competitive practices. Consumers and businesses in the financial services sector who feel they are being overcharged, as was suggested by the member, as a result of an agreement among competitors or some other type of anti-competitive behaviour can raise their complaints directly with the Competition Bureau.

Lastly, as my colleagues stated in the House on June 11, 2003, the finance committee sets its own agenda and is free to examine

whatever it chooses. If the member believes an issue should be examined in more detail, as he has indicated, he should make his request directly to the chair of the committee or ask his party representative on the committee to raise the issue.

Mr. Greg Thompson: Mr. Speaker, I respect that response by the parliamentary secretary and I understand completely what she is saying. We understand the responsibilities of the various ministers but we are hoping that something can be resolved.

It is fundamentally wrong when the two big banks set up this company called Moneris to basically skirt their own banking bylaws. That is where the problem occurred. It is easy to tell a company to shop around but when it has been doing business with a bank for a series of years and that bank takes one of its financial services and hives it off to another company and breaks the contractual agreement that the company had from the very beginning with the original bank, there is something wrong with this. We have seen this happen in the marketplace in the banking sector more than once.

You know yourself, Mr. Speaker, having been in business and seeing businesses in your own community, that some of these small businesses do not have the luxury of switching banks and shopping around.

What I am asking is that the parliamentary secretary bring this to the attention of the appropriate minister within government. I am prepared to do that as well and we are prepared to do that at committee stage. However I would like to see this situation resolved without going through a lengthy procedure which sometimes small companies have to go through; avoid a court case, if you will, Mr. Speaker. All I am asking is that we call these people before the House and make them accountable.

●(1920)

Ms. Judy Sgro: Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member that even with his cold and his voice cracking he has made his points very well.

I think, as parliamentarians, we all want to ensure that small business as big business are treated fairly and adequately. I will pass on the issues that have been raised this evening to the minister. I urge the member for New Brunswick Southwest to bring this to the attention of the chair of the committee. I am sure that if the chair feels that the committee needs to move forward with it, the committee certainly will do that.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): The motion that this House do now adjourn is deemed adopted. Therefore, the House stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow, pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:23 p.m.)

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