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Monday, October 20, 2003

—
Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, October 20, 2003

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

THE ROYAL ASSENT

• (1105)

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Order, please. I have the honour to inform the House that a communication has been received as follows:

Rideau Hall
Ottawa

October 20, 2003

Mr. Speaker,

I have the honour to inform you that the Right Honourable Adrienne Clarkson, Governor General of Canada, signified royal assent by written declaration to the bill listed in the Schedule to this letter on the 20th day of October, 2003, at 9:14 a.m.

Yours sincerely,

Barbara Uteck
Secretary to the Governor General

The schedule indicates the bill assented to was Bill C-42, an act respecting the protection of the Antarctic Environment, Chapter 20.

It being 11:06 a.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*Translation*]

FOOD AND DRUGS ACT

The House resumed from April 9, 2003, consideration of the motion that Bill C-420, an act to amend the Food and Drugs Act be now read the second time and referred to a committee.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this morning we are beginning the last hour of debate at second reading of Bill C-420, an act to amend the Food and Drugs Act, put forward by our hon. colleague from the Canadian Alliance.

Let us remember that in 1997 the House of Commons Standing Committee on Health was given a mandate to study all aspects of the

issue of legislating natural health products. The committee was charged with holding consultations, making analyses and formulating recommendations concerning the legislative and regulatory regime governing traditional medicines, homeopathic preparations, and vitamin and mineral supplements.

The committee was also expected to consult broadly with stakeholders, including associations, individuals representing consumers, manufacturers, distributors, growers, importers, exporters and retailers.

We see that this bill, like the committee's mandate, has reached a great many individuals who were very concerned about the regulation of natural health products. The committee held many hearings, heard many witnesses, and came to the realization that regulation of natural products was very controversial.

Many of the witnesses lobbied to have the regulations governing natural health products changed. Consequently, the committee members said that it was more than time to review the entire issue, which they did. The same year, a Health Canada survey showed that 56% of Canadians had used natural health products in the previous six months.

Thus we can see that Canadians and Quebecers are taking more responsibility for their own health and in many cases, this leads to increased interest in and demand for natural health products.

The committee concluded—it set out parameters—that natural health products have their own unique characteristics and must not be treated strictly as either food or pharmaceutical products.

Moreover, the committee said that natural health product regulations must not unduly restrict access by consumers. In addition, it concluded that the authority for decision-making must be given to a regulatory body that has dedicated expertise and experience with natural health products and that natural health product regulatory approaches must respect diverse cultural traditions.

These four principles listed by the committee led to the request for the creation of another committee, which could draft legislation on the matter. The bill before us today does not in any way reflect the safeguards or points of reference the committee set out.

The Standing Committee on Health would have liked the current act to be changed because, as it now stands, a natural product can be considered a food or a drug.

Private Members' Business

•(1110)

The Standing Committee on Health, which received the mandate to study the act, said that natural foods should come under a third category. They have their peculiarities and particularities and, thus, an act respecting food and drugs should not include them. Unfortunately, the bill before us does not correspond with what the Standing Committee on Health had decided.

What we are saying is that a third category absolutely must be created for products that should truly be identified by skilled people. Currently, everyone—whether at Health Canada or in the general public—claims to know the benefits or inconveniences of natural health foods. Unfortunately, far too often, people do not know what impact these might have.

In 1997 or 1998, the Standing Committee on Health had said it would be better if the legislation required us to form a committee with specialists. Thus, a third category must be created for natural health products. This is one of the conclusions of the report of the Standing Committee on Health. Again, to the committee, natural products are neither food nor drugs.

The report stated that regulations alone are not sufficient and that statutory amendments should be made as soon as possible. The report also indicated that the majority of witnesses who appeared before the committee had reached this same conclusion. As a result, the Bloc Québécois had asked for a certain flexibility, which does not exist under the present legislation.

The Bloc Québécois, which represents Quebec in the House of Commons, conducted a study and concluded that there are many manufacturers of natural products and many consumers of such products in Quebec. This industry generates over 3,000 jobs in Quebec. So, if a certain level of flexibility is not allowed and if care is not taken, numerous jobs could be lost.

In Quebec too, naturopaths have said that this would mean that some products that do not pass the approval regime applicable to drugs could be kept off the shelves. What is happening at present? Since natural food products have not been defined, they are sometimes classified as drugs and sometimes as food. Our natural products that fit in neither category are quite simply excluded. This is unacceptable.

Yes, statutory amendments are needed. A new category must be created, because natural health products are not food. We need a bill that will create a third category of products. Natural health products should not be subject to the approval regime for drugs, which would mean their withdrawal because they do not correspond to the overall definition of a drug.

The bill currently before the House is therefore vague. The Bloc Québécois is opposed to this bill because the experts, the committee and the public were ignored. In its present form, the bill must simply be defeated. That is what the Bloc Québécois is going to do, since it opposes this bill.

•(1115)

[English]

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-420, an act to

amend the definitions of the Food and Drugs Act, brought forward by my colleague for Nanaimo—Alberni.

The bill addresses an issue that is very important to many of my constituents in Edmonton—Strathcona and indeed many Canadians. If passed, Bill C-420 will categorize natural health products as food, as opposed to drugs. It is important to thank my colleague, the member for Nanaimo—Alberni, for his hard work in preparing the bill.

When I was first elected in 1997, I promised to make natural health products a major issue, and this bill addresses the concerns that so many Canadians have with the potential tightening of regulations when it comes to natural health products.

The issue has been important to my party even before the release of the standing committee's final report on health in 1998. After months of review, the committee chose to recommend the continuation of a paternal federal government attitude protecting Canadians from the unknown evils of natural health products. This unfortunate big brother approach to regulating natural health products, products that the committee's own research determined were safe and which uses were, "well known and pose minimal or no risk of harm", assumes that Canadians cannot be trusted to do their homework and educate themselves before taking natural health products.

Recently the government recommended creating a third category of natural health products to address questions of how these items should be classified. Manufacturers, distributors and average Canadians using the products have concerns that this increased regulation will limit their freedom of choice and product selection and will cause the costs of these treatments to skyrocket beyond what is affordable.

Canadians deserve greater freedom in their choice of complimentary treatments and natural health products. The government has long talked the talk of promoting and emphasizing wellness and prevention. However, it would seem, that when the time comes to walk the walk and make real, tangible and positive change by allowing greater access to safe, natural preventative health treatments, it is too busy devising new ways to tax the Canadian consumer.

It was the health committee's mandate to "consider the objectives of providing consumers freedom of choice and access to natural health products" while ensuring the quality and safety of such products. There can be no question that public safety must always be the first priority when considering any legislation, particularly as it pertains to a food or drug item. However the heavy regulation of these products is inconsistent with the experiences of Canadians, which have demonstrated overwhelmingly an incredibly safe historical pattern of use regarding natural health products.

The health committee's final report noted that both mortality and morbidity rates associated with natural health products use were negligible in comparison with pharmaceuticals. In fact improper use of prescription drugs by trained professionals is one of the largest causes of death in the United States. The bottom line is that the majority of natural health products are safe if used correctly; that is when used for the appropriate indications and in correct doses.

The report also emphasized that it is not practical, necessary or economically feasible to conduct toxicological studies to establish the safety of most natural health products.

Pharmaceutical testing can cost upwards of \$300,000 per product. It is clear that testing the 6,000 natural health products currently on the market is simply not realistic. In fact this type of testing is not even particularly desirable given the unavoidable approval costs that will be passed along to the average consumer. These costs will punish Canadian consumers for using safe products that prevent them from having to go to their general practitioners to get a prescription.

Indeed, unnecessary regulation of these products will only further tax the already strained health care system by causing natural health products users, incapable of paying the inflated prices for these safe and conventional inexpensive products, to give up on accessible forms of preventative medicine.

Canadians almost universally recognize natural health products as foods, certainly not as drugs, especially when consumed in the dosage and form recommended.

• (1120)

The bottom line is that existing emphasis on government control, licensing and regulation of mostly benign consumer products could be greatly simplified. Through bill C-420, we now have the opportunity to accomplish this end.

My party has recommended an organization structure for regulating natural health products. By regulating these products under the purview of Health Canada's food directorate, I believe we could ensure that these substances are viewed by the professionals with the training and experience best equipped to manage their safe distribution.

The government has taken steps to see that existing enforcement personnel receive adequate natural health product training, and I feel this effort is respectable. Unfortunately however, the committee's final report made recommendations for the allocations of these increased resources of natural health products management under the drug directorate.

These enforcement officers regulate these harmless products under the same discerning criteria as they do with strong and often dangerous prescription drugs. This attitude is consistent with the paternal theme in the final report that refuses to give average Canadians any credit in their own decision making abilities when it comes to natural supplements.

It comes down to this. Canadians should have their choices. This has been the constant theme of my colleague and our party on this side of the House.

Private Members' Business

Insisting on the further restriction of natural health products simply contradicts every principle Canadian natural health product users have articulated. Like most Canadians, the Canadian Alliance believes there are already too many enforcement personnel barging into health food stores with RCMP escort, seizing computers and raiding store shelves for packets of harmless melatonin or stevia, an herb traditionally used as a natural sweetener.

Surely the Government of Canada has more important things on which to spend taxpayer money. Yet under cost recovery for the new natural health products, the government will insist on extracting more taxpayer money. Natural health products consumers will end up paying more for their products.

In the past positive steps have been taken to address the needs and safety of Canadians who use natural health products through the creation of an NHP advisory panel to allow input from experts who are professionally involved with natural health products. Formal recognition of the need for improved labelling of products was made in 1998 and our party supported that initiative.

With the input of the Standing Committee on Health, there was the creation of an open and accountable appeals process, and finally the greater training of inspectors and enforcement officers on natural health products, which I mentioned earlier.

At the end of the day however, the government has followed its longstanding tradition of ruling on the side of a paternalistic and overarching system of controls and regulations which limit the ability of Canadians to access and make use of natural herbal supplements which have been proven to be harmless. There is no justification for this type of increased regulation of these products.

The bottom line is Canadians correctly assume that natural health products are safe and effective. They believe that decades of safe use should be the primary consideration when determining freedom of access. These Canadians are concerned that the government's new rules and regulations will unnecessarily restrict the access to medications and treatments they have safely used for many years. Ultimately their concerns are justified.

We hope the government will listen, because ultimately, as I have mentioned throughout the theme of my speech, natural health products are a preventive and exciting form of health care, especially because so many Canadians have increasingly been using these products.

It would be a shame to encourage going down the road where we would be banning certain products in the future arbitrarily, which would open up a whole new black market, an area which I did not address, of importing in other ways these sorts of products into the country. Canadians who want these products will get them one way or another.

Let us ensure that we have an open approach to this process so it can work for Canadians, one that is cost effective and, as was mentioned by my colleague from Nanaimo—Alberni, ensures these products do not get classified under the drug category.

Private Members' Business

Mr. John Bryden (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Aldershot, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have to thank the member for Nanaimo—Alberni for bringing forward Bill C-420 and solving a television commercial mystery for me that I have wondered about for a very long time.

The House will be familiar with the commercial which appears in several forms showing a man coming out of a house one morning, leaping and jumping about, holding hands, jumping over mailboxes and showing great excitement and joie de vivre. We all know, when we see that commercial, that the man has taken a drug that has cured him, at least temporarily, of sexual impotence. He had a nice night before and that is why he is so joyously happy.

I have always wondered why the people who put that commercial together did not just simply say that this was an advertisement for a drug for sexual impotence. However it turns out there was a very good reason why not.

Schedule A in the Food and Drugs Act lists a number of maladies for which it is forbidden to advertise a cure for in the way of any kind of drug or any other prophylactic. Among those various maladies is sexual impotence. Obviously the people marketing this drug are unable to actually name the purpose of the drug.

Bill C-420 addresses this whole question of the list of maladies in schedule A for which it is forbidden to advertise a cure or a remedy. The bill proposed by the member for Nanaimo—Alberni would eliminate the schedule altogether. I have to say that the member has struck a real chord here.

This list was compiled in 1934, before antibiotics were discovered, Mr. Speaker. On that list we can find things like arthritis, asthma, diabetes, depression, gangrene, glaucoma, gout, and it goes on and on. We know there are a number of drugs on the market that address these particular sicknesses. It seems completely unreasonable that the list as it exists makes it impossible to advertise these drugs and their purposes relating to these particular forms of sickness should exist.

That having been said, I still have reservations about simply eliminating schedule A because there is the danger that people without good conscience, shall we say, might try to market cures, remedies and drugs, both prescription and especially non-prescription drugs, which might make claims that are unwarranted.

The bottom line is that schedule A should be scrapped. The member is perfectly right on that point. I realize the Minister of Health has indicated a willingness to overhaul schedule A, but I can see it is completely out of date and should be gone.

The other aspect of Bill C-420 is the member also wants to redefine the word food to include natural health products. I have a lot of problems with that because one thing food is, is food by definition is a natural health product. We all take food because it is good for us. We have this difficulty. If we add natural health products to the definition of food, basically we are defining a word by words that mean essentially the same thing. The difficulty is a semantic difficulty, but a very important difficulty if we actually take this into law.

Natural health products are thought by many not in terms of simply being good for us, but are actually thought in terms of having some curative properties or some properties that might address certain symptoms that one might possess.

● (1125)

In the field of natural remedies, the usage of the words “natural health product” is in this context of something having curative properties that might address a person's symptoms of some kind of malady. But in the strict sense, natural health product simply could mean, and the courts would of course argue this, any kind of food that we might want to take. So eating a tomato or a potato could have curative properties, and I do not think that this is the intention the member for Nanaimo—Alberni has when he wants to add natural health product to the list of foods.

I would suggest that what the member really wants to do and what he should be seeking to do is to add a new definition in the list of definitions in the Food and Drugs Act and have a middle category between drug and food, and that middle category would be medicine. Because what we are really talking about when we move into the field of natural health products and their effect on a person's physical well-being is that we see them as things that can be taken as medicine, and a medicine is not necessarily a drug. A medicine is not necessarily a pharmaceutical.

I have to tell the member opposite that I have great sympathy with where he is going on this, because I am not one who believes that pharmaceutical drugs are the answer to everything. I think one of the big problems, and I think one of the reasons that is driving the member, is that pharmaceutical drugs take a lot of clinical trials, so it takes a long time to get a drug on the marketplace. If a natural health product has to go through clinical trials, then it is delayed in reaching the market.

I point out to the House that a clinical trial is simply a collection of empirical information. Clinical trials are no better than the number of tests that are taken on a particular drug. As it happens, some natural health products are empirically tested over centuries. For an example, I refer to tea. Everyone drinks tea and we know that it has no deleterious side effects. Tea was originally a natural health product that was seen as a stimulant. That is how tea was brought into England in the 18th century when the tea trade developed. We now know that tea does have a stimulating effect and we know now from these very long trials that it has no side effects.

The difficulty with pharmaceuticals is that the public has been led to believe that simply because pharmaceuticals go through a clinical trial of several thousand tests, let us say, that there are no side effects. However, there can be very serious side effects of pharmaceuticals that pass into the open market.

I think we really do need to look in the area that is directed by the member for Nanaimo—Alberni, because I think there is a third category and that third category is medicine, where we do know from long experience there are no side effects to that medicine about which we should be concerned and we know from long experience that it appears to have a positive benefit to the people taking it. There is a middle ground there, which I think we should consider very seriously.

Private Members' Business

So I am somewhat divided on the bill; I would think that if the bill passed the House and went to the health committee that the committee could strike down schedule A and there would be no impact. As a matter of fact, it might galvanize Health Canada into coming up with a new schedule, which I do not think is possible, actually; I think schedule A just has to disappear because that is the end of it.

As for the question of actually changing the definition of food to include natural health products, I do not think that works. But I think the member has done the House a service in giving us an opportunity to assess the relative values of natural health products and pharmaceuticals. Perhaps there is a middle road, as was mentioned by the previous Bloc speaker, and that middle road is the defining of something called medicine.

•(1130)

Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's West, PC): Mr. Speaker, I want to say a few words in support of the bill put forth by my colleague from Nanaimo—Alberni. This bill deals with a concern that a lot of people across the country are expressing. More and more people are becoming conscious about their health and more and more people are looking to natural health remedies.

In fact, this is not a new phenomenon. The people who originally settled this country used such products very successfully, and especially the aboriginal groups used them, not only then, but even yet they continue to use such products very successfully. In fact, the basis for many of the drugs and whatever vitamins and supplements we use today is from sources identified and practices used by these groups. This is certainly not new.

What is happening, of course, that is governments, as governments do, try to get overly protective and try to make sure that everything is regimented, everything is labelled, and everything is listed on the label, which costs manufacturers fortunes but which also eliminates many products that would assist the average person if perhaps they were looked upon as food rather than being thrown into the drug category.

If my colleague from Bonavista—Trinity—Conception were to speak on this bill, he would undoubtedly talk about a product put forth in Newfoundland and Labrador: the seal oil capsule. It is becoming extremely popular not only in our province but throughout the country and internationally. One of the concerns people have about it is that the labelling will prevent it from being exported to countries which are really very interested in obtaining this product. They think that the government will probably consider it more a drug than an actual food product. If it were a food product, there would be absolutely no problem whatsoever in exporting it to countries such as Taiwan, where there is a great interest and a demand for the product mainly because of the benefits of taking such a supplement. Seal oil capsules are apparently even more potent than the old cod-liver oil capsule, which many people took for years because of its vitamin D supplement that was included.

Sometimes a little bit of common sense and rationality go a long way. Bureaucrats, perhaps more so than governments, get caught up in the fact that everything has to be labelled and identified with the pros and the cons. For 90% of what we eat and use throughout the world we have no idea of what is involved, but in certain areas where

we have some control and jurisdiction everyone wants to have a say and all we are doing is complicating the whole situation. Perhaps we should be a little more lenient and less black and white on issues.

The act as presently constituted protects against the use of products which would be poisonous or harmful to us. The act prevents anyone exaggerating any benefits from the product being considered, used or developed. There is already a protection for people who would have such concerns. What is needed, as I have said, is some common sense and the opportunity for people to use products which they know themselves are good and are not harmful, but are beneficial to them for whatever reason. We are tightening the screws on these regulations; we are closing doors. That is not what we should be doing. We should be opening the doors, as long as we are protecting Canadians from products that would be harmful.

We support the initiative. I congratulate my colleague for bringing it forth. There may be some refinements needed, such as some of the suggestions just mentioned by the member opposite. There may be better ways of doing it, but that is why we bring ideas forth to the House; as the issues are debated in the House and as they go through committee, we can make the proper refinements and placements.

•(1135)

But instead of trying to come up with legislation that is going to tie the hands of our people and create more red tape and bureaucracy, let us try to cut out the red tape and bureaucracy and come up with some common sense solutions which would help the people of the country rather than put a millstone around their necks.

Mr. Grant Hill (Macleod, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk on Bill C-420 for a moment and explain my involvement on the issue. I should have a disclaimer, and the disclaimer is as follows: I am not a user of natural health products. I have never, ever taken any of these natural health products, so I would like to say that I am a little bit like the Auditor General in that I am independent of the industry and of those individuals who manufacture and produce these products.

I am also, as a medical doctor, a guy who has had the choice or opportunity of listening to my patients talk about the use of these products. I formed an opinion, consequently, about the use of these products because of my association as a practising GP. I found that a lot of my patients were using these products and had good success with them. In fact, they were somewhat reticent to tell me until they found that I was not negative about their use.

When I queried them, I would often ask them if they were taking any prescription drugs and also if they were taking anything natural. Many of them told me that they were taking the products to boost their immune systems. They felt better and they thought that it prevented them from coming to see me; there was no negative intended, they said, "But we would rather not come to see you at all, Doc". I think that is the appropriate way to handle medical issues: with preventive measures, to try to stay away from practising physicians.

Private Members' Business

I came here in 1993 and was surprised to find that there seemed to be, at the bureaucracy level in Ottawa, a real roadblock to the use of these products. I will use an example of two products that I myself found to have roadblocks that I could not explain, either scientifically or just in terms of the regular administrative process.

The first is melatonin, a natural hormone that our body produces from the pituitary. Through scientific research, we have found that melatonin is useful for sleep. People take melatonin for jet lag and for the regular things like insomnia. I had never taken melatonin myself but I knew people who had, so I thought I would ask them if it had any side effects, or whether it made them feel dozy the next day, and the answer was no.

Suddenly that product was taken from the Canadian health food shelves. I went to the regulators and asked if they had found some harm, some side effects or some contamination. The answer was no, so I asked why they took it off the market and, interestingly enough, why did they allow it if a person went to the U.S. and brought it back for personal importation? In my view, there was no satisfactory answer.

The second product was a sweetener called stevia, a natural, plant-based sweetener. It is very sweet. I had an opportunity to taste this stuff, to take a little bit on my finger; it is profoundly sweet. A tiny drop of this in tea, coffee or juice sweetens things up. It is natural. It is from a plant source. Stevia was taken off the market. I did the same thing for this product and asked why it had been taken off the market. I asked if side effects, contamination or harm had been found. There was no satisfactory answer.

Based on that experience, I believe there was some kind of bureaucratic reason to remove those products from Canadian shelves. They were taken off the health food shelves. They had been available to the public and people could get them from the U.S. through personal importation. None of this made sense to me.

I was on the health committee in those days and had an opportunity to go through the hearing process that the House of Commons went through after the 1997 election. During that election it was fascinating, because people who had used a product that was taken off the shelves asked the same questions that I had. They asked if there was a reason to take the items away from them. They did not get a satisfactory answer, and they actively went out and campaigned for freedom in natural health products.

● (1140)

That was a factor in many ridings across the country in the 1997 election. People in my own riding wanted to know my position. I said I was in favour of the most freedom on these products. They said that was good and they would vote for me. I know there were ridings throughout the country where it was actually a factor in the election.

Subsequently, with the health minister aware of that, we went through hearings on the issue that were quite fascinating. We heard from native healers, Chinese healers and very diverse sections of Canadian society. The message to the government was to allow people to take these products for their own health and prevention and not to put up bureaucratic hurdles unless there were good reasons. Recommendations came from the health committee and those

recommendations, I believe, were sound, secure, thoughtful recommendations.

What is happening today? This bill is on the table today because of what is happening with Health Canada today. Restrictions are being placed on products because products are making health claims.

I will use an example here, which is not an exact example, to show how absurd that is. When Health Canada bureaucrats search natural health publications they may find a product that says "Vitamin C will prevent scurvy". That is a scientific and medical fact, but if a company takes a vitamin C product and makes the statement that it is a health claim, suddenly a phone call is made and the company is told it is fabricating a product and making a health claim and that if it continues to do that Health Canada will shut it down or fine it.

Some of these products, quite frankly, have health benefits, preventive benefits in some cases and actual benefits in other cases. That is why I will be supporting this private member's bill at vote time.

Is it perfect? I listened to the constructive comments of my colleagues across the way and down the way. I found those comments to be constructive because this surely is a non-partisan issue.

Do I have a critique to make of Health Canada on this file? I do. These bureaucrats are, in most cases, well intentioned, well meaning individuals, but when it comes to these products I do not think they understand the way they could and should understand the benefits that the products can bring.

I summarize this issue with a statement that I found to be powerful while campaigning: informed consumers are far better judges of their health care needs than any Health Canada bureaucrat in Ottawa.

Where should the bureaucrats be involved? Here is the other side of the coin. The bureaucrats should be involved when there is evidence of side effects, evidence of contamination or evidence of harm.

I challenge the bureaucrats on melatonin or on stevia. If there is new scientific evidence that melatonin has impacts on society over a period of time, surely that evidence should be brought to bear, made public, allowed scrutiny and allowed rebuttal so that if melatonin is not safe for the Canadian public it would be stricken from the market and the importation for personal use would be banned. Surely that is what the Health Canada bureaucrats would want. That is what I as a physician would want and every health practitioner in the country would want.

If there is no such new evidence, if there is no problem with packaging, labelling, side effects, contamination or harm, "Get out of our face" is my message to the Health Canada bureaucrats.

Private Members' Business

• (1145)

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, I want to congratulate the member for Nanaimo—Alberni for his bill. I have long been a supporter and advocate of the private member's bill and motion system. I myself have had some success through my research to bring ideas to this place and to have good debate. The member has achieved that with Bill C-420.

I also want to compliment the member on the efforts he made over a long period of time to educate the House on the issue. A big part of what we do here is to earn support and respect for issues that we bring forward by providing compelling arguments and evidence that this is something that we should look at. I think the member has been quite successful.

Private members' bills do not often make it through the entire process. Our system in the past has made it extremely difficult for good ideas to find their way into the laws of Canada, but from time to time they do, which is why at this stage it is important that we not be too critical of a private member's bill that may have been crafted a year or two years ago in terms of the thinking, but that as we have talked about it, obviously there are some suggestions on how we can improve it. On this particular item, it is a matter of whether it will go further to the next step. Is this an issue that we should be looking at?

I do not think there is a member in this place who is not familiar with the arguments related to natural health products. It has been with us for a long time. It is relevant in probably each and every one of our ridings. I think our constituents would want to know that we are looking carefully at all the possibilities. I know there are concerns about whether or not health related benefits from certain products are valid or appropriate. I am sure there are arguments about whether these products are a food or a drug.

I was on the health committee for four years and had an opportunity to go through the products when I chaired a subcommittee on Bill C-7 on controlled drugs and substances. I know how difficult it can be to get consensus on some of these fine points. We went the same route on genetically modified organisms. I found Health Canada very rigid in dealing with these matters and I do not think that it should have been.

We have to be a little more open to this. I understand that protecting the health of Canadians is an overarching objective but the evidence of the benefits of natural health products is not just anecdotal. It has been proven in virtually centuries of use, which has been handed down from generation to generation, that there really are clear examples.

Could I explain each one of them? Probably not. Are they applicable and helpful to everyone? No, but I am not sure that there is a drug anywhere in the world that is helpful to everybody to the same degree. We are all different. Our circumstances are different.

This, to me, represents an important option that we as legislators should consider. This is an opportunity for us to say that this is an issue that we need to have a closer look at but that we cannot do that unless it goes to the next stage.

I will be supporting the bill because I think the member has given the House a lot to think about. Members have raised some questions which should be explored further and I think the next stage is where

that will happen. I would not want to see the bill die simply because in some people's views it is not a perfect bill at this point in time. The substantive issue in what the member has raised is the important part.

I hope that members will give some due consideration to Bill C-420. It is about time we spoke more frankly and deeply about the issues raised by the hon. member about the benefits of natural health products.

• (1150)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Colleagues, there are seven minutes left in this second hour of debate. Is there a taker?

If not, I will go to the hon. member for Nanaimo—Alberni, who has five minutes to conclude the debate.

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I would be quite happy to use the seven minutes, with unanimous consent.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): The hon. member for Nanaimo—Alberni has asked for unanimous consent to use the full seven minutes. Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

• (1155)

Mr. James Lunney: Mr. Speaker, I thank all my colleagues who spoke this morning to Bill C-420, and especially for granting me the extra couple of minutes.

I appreciate the remarks made by the hon. member for Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Aldershot, who was the first to speak from the government side to the issue, and for the support from my colleagues from Edmonton North and from Macleod. I know my colleague from Nanaimo—Cowichan would have been happy to speak as well.

Referring to my colleague's remarks about a third category between food and drugs, in fact, after all the debate that went through the House in 1997 and 1998 with the health committee, the health committee and the transition team made that recommendation. Canadians were led to believe they would be getting a third category, not food, not drugs, but it would be in the middle; physiologically active nutrients that have a health benefit, whether it is identified by tradition, hundreds of years of use with no apparent harm, whether it is identified by scientific investigation or whether it is absolutely proven beyond a shadow of a doubt, as are many health products.

The unfortunate thing is that Health Canada reneged on the legislative renewal that would have created the third category. It simply said that it would have a new health products directorate. The Office of Natural Health Products was set up and NHPs were placed squarely as a subclass of drugs.

Private Members' Business

Unfortunately, the legislative renewal that was promised to accompany the regulations, which will come into effect in January 2004, has been scrubbed. I see, and I believe many Canadians see, that as a betrayal of the confidence and trust that Canadians put into the process. The legislative renewal would have required addressing the antiquated subsections 3(1) and 3(2) that say one shall not label and advertise that a vitamin, mineral, herbal or natural health product will influence a whole schedule of diseases; schedule A that has been discussed this morning.

If it were only the labelling and advertising issue, I do not think it would be as serious. It is the consequence of that section that is so serious. The consequence is that Health Canada says that as soon as a health claim is made the product is then taken off the market unless it goes through a multi-million dollar drug approval process, which simply is inappropriate for a natural health product that is not patentable.

The point that I have been trying to get across is that natural health products are not patentable. Drug companies make huge investments into products for which they hope to receive profits. The health committee is now looking at this. The industry committee was looking at the patent extensions of 20 years and now, with ever-greening multiple years beyond that, for profits on a patented drug. However natural health products have no such patents. Therefore, the pharma world is not interested, it seems, in promoting that kind of research. It seems to me it is fundamentally wrong for Health Canada to force a natural product through that kind of approval regime.

There has been some confusion about what Bill C-420 would actually do. Bill C-420 would not gut the whole Office of Natural Health Products directorate. It would simply move it from under a drug style directorate to under a food style directorate. We could still have the good manufacturing practices and the inspections. We could still make sure that what is on the bottle is in the bottle. We could still provide assurance of health claims. We could review them to determine whether a health claim is traditional without evidence of harm. We could provide Canadians with assurances that the health claim has some scientific validity.

The question of safety is not really an issue. Where there is an issue of safety we would all be in agreement. Evidence should be brought forth and if it were dangerous then we would address it in a public manner.

What is outrageous is that Health Canada would take products that might improve the health of Canadians off the market. Frankly, I think Canadians would find that unacceptable. A simple mineral supplement like chromium picolinate is absolutely essential for blood sugar metabolism. That is true for all members of the House. We cannot metabolize sugar without chromium. We excrete it when we metabolize sugar. The fact that Health Canada would take that most physiologically effective form off the market seems to be fundamentally perverse and contrary to the public interest.

A mineral supplement, which was developed in Alberta, called E. M. Power+, has been helping Canadians with a mental illness known as bipolar disease or manic depression. There is a tremendous cost to the individuals and there is a high risk of suicide.

● (1200)

We actually have people in the House today who are here because they are concerned. They are watching the debate and many are watching across the country because they are concerned. They feel their lives are being threatened because Health Canada is taking the products off the market simply because people begin to tell others that this could help them with their mental illness. There are over 3,000 Canadians receiving help from this product and yet Health Canada would move to take it off the market. They want to know, why would Health Canada do this when there is evidence of benefit?

I would like to give an example. There was a lady from Ontario who had been on psychiatric drugs for 18 years. Her husband had been on suicide watch for many years. She has been taking this vitamin and mineral product for about two and a half years and she is off her psychiatric drugs. She is not trying to kill herself or her husband any more. She is holding down a job, paying taxes and she is volunteering. She wants to know, why would Health Canada take this away from her? Frankly, so do I.

Folic acid is well known as the best defence against heart attack and stroke. Health Canada knows that and it is reported in the *Canadian Journal of Cardiology*. If a simple vitamin, folic acid, is a better defence than anything else we know of, would Canadians not want to know about it?

Like the statement from Shakespeare, I feel that there is something rotten in the state of Denmark, with no reference to any member on the other side. But there is something wrong with the way Health Canada manages natural health products. The new Natural Health Products Directorate is maintaining antiquated subsections 3(1) and 3(2), and will continue to take products with a health claim off the market. Health Canada sent the police to raid the computers of a little company in Raymond, Alberta, and has obstructed delivery of the product.

In times when health costs are spiralling, Canadians would expect Health Canada to have an interest in a product that might lower the cost, lower the morbidity of a serious disease, and improve clinical outcomes. That was the approach of the Province of Alberta when it heard about the effect that E.M. Power+ was having on Albertans, it asked to look into this. There are huge costs associated with it. A \$544,000 study was set up at the University of Calgary under the leadership of Dr. Bonnie Kaplan. Canadians feel betrayed and certainly the people taking the product who have their lives back feel betrayed when Health Canada hears about this and moves in to shut down the study.

*Government Orders***GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

Is there no room for science to progress the treatment of disease? There in an excellent article in the September issue of *Saturday Night* called "A Prescription for Profit" which talked about the attitude of the drug companies looking at sickness as a marketing opportunity.

Frankly, it is known that mental illness is expected to increase in Canada by about 25% over the next 10 years. It seems that the drug companies are positioning themselves to capture the market. Many of the drug companies mistakenly take a patent on a product that is being used to treat an illness and consider it a patent on the illness itself. There is something fundamentally wrong with that.

That is made even worse if Health Canada is complicit in maintaining that which is contrary to the public interest. It seems to me that Health Canada ought to be on the forefront of advancing opportunities to advance health care in Canada. If a natural health product can do that, Canadians have a right to know and have a right to access low risk products.

I encourage members to think about this issue seriously. I would be quite in favour of a third category. It would mean opening the act. The reason I put it as a subclass of food is because of the response of Health Canada. Under the food directorate we can still have the good manufacturing practices, inspections, and the safety that people require without having the bureaucratic and heavy-handed response of a drug style directorate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): It being 12:06 p.m., the time provided for debate has expired. Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And more than five members having risen:

• (1205)

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, October 22, 2003, at the beginning of private members' business.

[*Translation*]

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-49, an act respecting the effective date of the representation order of 2003, as reported (with amendment) from the committee.

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

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

Some hon. members: Question.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): At the request of the chief government whip, the division is deferred until 3 p.m., after oral question period.

* * *

CANADIAN FORCES SUPERANNUATION ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-37, an act to amend the Canadian forces Superannuation Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, as reported (without amendment) from committee.

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.) moved that the bill be concurred in at report stage.

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

Some hon. members: Question.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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(Motion agreed to)

The Acting speaker (Mr. Bélair): When shall the bill be read the third time? With leave of the House, now?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*English*]

Hon. John McCallum moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak today in support of Bill C-37, an act to amend the Canadian Forces Superannuation Act.

[*Translation*]

The Canadian Forces Superannuation Act was introduced in 1960. Although improvements have been made over the years, there have been no major reviews or amendments for over 30 years, with the exception of those made in 1999 in conjunction with federal public service superannuation reform.

• (1210)

[*English*]

While the fundamental principles of the act remain valid, Canadian society and Canadian Forces services have changed considerably over the last three decades. These changes must be reflected in the human resources policies and practices of our military.

For example, the Canadian Forces, like most other militaries in the western world, have been confronting a recruitment and retention challenge in recent years. Competition for skilled workers is intense and the employment options available to Canadians with the right qualifications are greater than ever.

In order to be competitive in today's labour market, the Canadian Forces has adopted a number of measures to position itself as an employer of choice. A modern, flexible and effective pension plan that provides our military members with more control and choice regarding their career and financial planning would go a long way in helping the Canadian Forces achieve this goal and help it overcome the recruitment and retention challenges it is now facing.

However, modernizing the pension legislation for the Canadian military is not just about helping the Canadian Forces attract the best and the brightest candidates. It is also about ensuring that our men and women in uniform are taken care of, have confidence in their futures, and are appropriately compensated for their service. In short, this is an important quality of life issue.

[*Translation*]

The Government of Canada has made great strides in recent years in improving the quality of life of Canadian military personnel and their families. Pay and benefits for Armed Forces members have been improved, the military health system has been enhanced, and there is greater support for family members.

The Government of Canada cannot rest on its laurels, however. It will continue to ensure the well-being of Canadian men and women in uniform.

[*English*]

The amendments contained in the bill represent another significant step forward in the quality of life file by bringing fairness, flexibility, and inclusion to the military pension plan.

The bill before the House today would modernize military pensions through a series of both major and minor amendments to the Canadian Forces Superannuation Act.

For example, some of the changes being proposed in Bill C-37 would shorten the period of time required to qualify for a pension benefit from 10 years to 2 years, improve pension portability, provide entitlement to an immediate unreduced pension after 25 years of service in the Canadian Forces, improve pension benefits for survivors, and provide pension coverage for our reservists. This last amendment regarding reservists is particularly important.

Before continuing, I wish to point out that the shift from 20 years to 25 years of service for an immediate unreduced pension will not disadvantage any member of the Canadian Forces because each member is entitled to make the choice between the new system and the old system, whichever of these two systems is better for the member in question.

Turning now to reservists, whether it is assisting Canadians during forest fires, hurricanes or other times of crisis, or contributing to Canada's international commitments, our reservists provide dedicated, professional, and essential service to the Canadian Forces, to the country, and to all Canadians.

We have a duty therefore to ensure that they are appropriately recognized and compensated for this service. The amendments set out in the bill bring long term, full time reservists under the same pension arrangements as their regular force counterparts. The bill also lays the foundation needed to develop a pension plan for reservists who serve on a part time basis.

The implementation of a pension plan for Canada's reservists is an issue the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs, among others, has worked hard for in recent years. I am proud to say that today we are one step closer to achieving this goal.

A concerted effort was made to ensure the views and concerns of key stakeholders were considered in the development of these proposed amendments. The Canadian Forces Pension Advisory Committee, the formal body responsible for advising me on pension matters, was consulted regularly and has endorsed the reform proposals.

Extensive briefings, focus groups, and other communications opportunities were used to inform and solicit feedback from regular and reserve force members. Members from both the regular and reserve forces support the proposed amendments.

I would like to emphasize the government's continuing commitment to consulting and communicating with pension plan members throughout the whole modernization process, including the development of regulations and implementation arrangements.

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[*Translation*]

With this modernization of the Canadian Forces Superannuation Act, Parliament will not be required to pass supplementary estimates. Nor will it be necessary to draw additional funds from the Defence Services Program.

The increases arising out of this modernization exercise will be part of the existing financial framework. The chief actuary of the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions feels that the other changes proposed in Bill C-37 would not lead to any cost increases. Instead, there might even be some slight savings.

• (1215)

[*English*]

The benefits associated with this legislation are self-evident. However, in conclusion, I would like to reiterate two key reasons why this legislation is critical for the Canadian Forces and by extension, all Canadians.

First, the amendments would provide for a pension plan that better meets the needs of our regular and reserve force members, and their families. It would ensure that they get the benefits they need and deserve.

Second, the proposed changes to the Canadian Forces Superannuation Act will assist the Canadian Forces in the critical areas of recruitment and retention by positioning the military as an employer of choice.

For these reasons, I hope the House will support the bill.

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the words of the Minister of National Defence on this very important issue.

My question for the minister deals with amendments that I brought forward on behalf of the official opposition at committee stage of the bill. They deal with the fact that under Bill C-37, as is the case with the vast majority of legislation that is passed through this place, the minister has the power of course to develop, implement and enact regulations. The concern I expressed at committee was that there should be a serious commitment. I was hoping to have something in writing that would require the minister and/or the department not only to consult as he referred to in his remarks, but actually a commitment that he or his department communicate any impending changes directly and in writing to the stakeholders, to the actual contributors and to the pensioners, as it were.

I was reassured at committee by the parliamentary secretary to the minister that, although it was not in writing, because of the structure of the Canadian Forces Pension Advisory Committee and the Service Pension Board which would continue to administer this, two way communication would take place. Therefore the stakeholders would not find themselves in a situation sometime in the future where, if they did not read the *Gazette*, they would not find out about some important change that would affect their bottom line.

Could the minister comment on that particular concern?

Hon. John McCallum: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his party's support for the bill. It certainly helps us

to get it through the House in an expeditious manner. I also take seriously the comments he made.

Certainly this is a good news change in the pension system. To the best of my knowledge, because of the grandfathering arrangement, I do not think any individual should be affected negatively by it.

The hon. member has my undertaking today that the department will indeed communicate with, inform and have meetings with the stakeholders to the maximum extent possible so that everybody is fully informed and that people have an opportunity to raise any concerns that they may have.

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I must say at the outset that I certainly appreciate the opportunity to speak to this very important legislation as the minister has just outlined. It will improve the pension benefits of members of the Canadian armed forces.

This is the first opportunity I have had since becoming the national defence critic for the official opposition to speak to defence related issues in the House of Commons.

In 1998 the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs released a report on the quality of life in the Canadian Forces. The report contained a recommendation that members of the reserve force in our military should also be eligible to receive benefits under the Canadian Forces Superannuation Act. Today, five years later, legislation to implement this recommendation as well as modernize and enhance pension benefits is finally working its way through Parliament.

Overall, the legislative changes contained within Bill C-37 are welcome. For that reason the Canadian Alliance will be supporting this progressive initiative that should have been done many years ago.

Once the legislation comes into effect, members of the Canadian Forces will be offered pension benefits which are more in line with what is offered to employees of the public service and the private sector. The new superannuation plan will calculate pension benefits using years of pensionable service instead of terms of service.

The legislation will allow members to obtain early access to benefits from the age of 50. Members who decide to leave the Canadian Forces will also be allowed to take the value of their pension with them. Members of the reserve force will finally be able to receive a proper pension benefit.

The inclusion of the reserve force is perhaps one of the more important changes contained within the legislation. The reserves have always been a critical component of our Canadian armed forces. It is about time the government acted to put in place some sort of substantive acknowledgment of their contribution to our military. I have always been more than a bit upset with how our reserves have been treated in the past.

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I have already referred to my concerns about adequate communications with the contributors, the pensioners, in the future. My concern was not so much with consultations, which I readily acknowledge the minister mentioned in his remarks have been conducted up to this point. There has been widespread consultation, and I do not dispute for a moment the facts as the minister presented them that contributors and by and large stakeholders both in the reserves and the regular forces are very supportive of this legislation.

My concern is in the future, perhaps when the present minister is no longer the minister, that communication and any future regulations would actually be required to be communicated directly to the people that are affected. It is not necessarily today or even tomorrow, but years in the future.

Not long ago I was contacted by one of our true wartime heroes, Cliff Wenzel, a veteran who fought during several conflicts as a pilot in the Royal Canadian Air Force. He has also been awarded several decorations resulting from his service to our country. After serving some 20 years in the air force, Mr. Wenzel decided to apply for early retirement on a reduced pension and continue his involvement in the air force as a squadron leader in the auxiliary reserve.

For some strange reason still unknown to Mr. Wenzel, after some 40 years he was denied a reduced pension because his early retirement was deemed not in the public interest. According to the government, spending 10 years in the air force reserve was not in the public interest. This has left Mr. Wenzel with absolutely no pension, after spending a total of 30 years in the air force, 20 years in active regular service and 10 years in the reserve. Let us be clear. Mr. Wenzel served 20 years in the regular air force, another 10 years in the reserves, and the government has deemed his service to our country does not qualify him for an early reduced pension.

Unfortunately, over the past while there have been quite a few cases that are similar to Mr. Wenzel's where our veterans have received no benefits from the Canadian Forces. Major Bruce Henwood discovered to his amazement that he was not eligible for lump sum compensation after losing both his legs in Croatia. Last year the situation of Lieutenant Colonel Al Trotter was raised in the House by my colleague, the member for Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys, after he was denied a prisoner of war pension supplement.

• (1220)

These instances of outright neglect by the government unfortunately seem to be all too symptomatic of its overall disregard for our Canadian military. The government's disdain for our military extends beyond its poor treatment of our veterans even to the men and women who presently serve in the Canadian Forces.

As recently as last week I launched a campaign with the help of a military spouse, Ms. Sheri Gauthier, to protest impending rent increases for military housing units on base provided by the Canadian Forces Housing Agency. Sadly, many military families living in those housing units are forced to sacrifice their quality of life as all too often the homes are in disrepair and well below acceptable housing standards. Yet the government is imposing on many of the units substantial rent increases well above acceptable provincial levels.

It is simply unimaginable what some of our military families have to put up with when living in housing on base. Many of these families are tired of keeping quiet about the shoddy housing they are provided with. However the majority refuse to speak out for fear of reprisal.

If members of the House need further evidence, they need only travel down the road and visit CFB Rockcliffe, only a few minutes away from Parliament Hill. At a time when homelessness is such a serious concern, extra housing units at this base were offered to homeless individuals in the Ottawa area. However, if we can believe it, these homes are in such poor condition the city of Ottawa would not allow the homeless to move into them. It must have been quite disheartening for the military families who still reside there to be deemed to be the exception to the rule.

The long term neglect of our military personnel on the part of government needs to come to an end. The men and women who serve in the Canadian Forces are our military. Without them we cannot defend our borders, protect our country and assist those in need at home and abroad.

If the government wants to improve the sorry state of the Canadian Forces, it needs to stop its sorry treatment of our military personnel. To do this, the government should start by doing three things. First, it could start by paying our military personnel better wages. Second, it could start by investing in properly equipping our military with the tools they need to do their job. Third, the government needs to start giving our Canadian Forces personnel the proper respect and recognition they deserve for their hard work.

I was reading the local paper this morning at home before I came to work. I noticed in the letters to the editor section of the *Ottawa Citizen* that one of the letters talked about the moving service for the two soldiers who tragically recently lost their lives, Sergeant Short and Corporal Beerenfenger. I will quote from the letter in the *Ottawa Citizen* of Monday, October 20, 2003:

Lieutenant-General Rick Hillier, commander of the army, presided over the service and spoke with dignity, respect and compassion. A powerful speaker, he uttered the most truthful words: "It is the soldier, not the politician, who is the hero. It is the soldier, not the bureaucracy, that gives us democracy".

That jumped out at me because I thought no truer words were ever spoken and only adds to the issue that I have with the government on how it treats our military.

The legislation we are debating today, Bill C-37, makes a positive improvement to the benefits our military personnel receive. There is no question of that. However, yet again I would argue that more needs to be done.

Men and women starting a career in the Canadian Forces certainly do not expect to be paid lavish wages. They do expect to be paid a fair salary that will allow them to maintain a reasonable lifestyle. With ever-increasing cost of living expenses such as car insurance, gas and now even rent, the salaries paid to our military personnel are being stretched thin. The government must ensure that the salaries paid to our Canadian Forces personnel are adequate and properly reflect their hard work and their service to our country.

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We need only reflect back a couple of years ago. An exposé was done on one of our national newscasts and I do not remember whether it was CBC or CTV. It revealed a sad and humiliating spectacle of Canadian Forces families going to get their groceries at local food banks. They did not have adequate remuneration to actually buy groceries for their young children and I thought how sad. I know there have been improvements made since then, but much more needs to be done, and I think the minister would agree with that.

● (1225)

The men and women of the Canadian Forces do not ask for much, I argue. Day in and day out they perform their duties and carry out the tasks assigned to them and fulfill missions given to them by our government. All the while our Canadian Forces do an exemplary job and consistently exceed expectations. All they ask for in return is some recognition by their government of their job well done.

Earlier, I mentioned Mr. Cliff Wenzel, a retired air force pilot who wants more than anything else just some recognition by his government for his service in the reserves. He wants his government on the record stating that the 10 years he spent in the reserves was in the public interest.

Those in the military today want their government to be proud of the work they do, not ashamed of the fact that our military occasionally might have to use physical force to save the lives of innocent civilians while serving on peacekeeping missions overseas.

The folks who serve in our Canadian Forces do an excellent job. I cannot understand why the government will not give them more money so we can have resources to help those in need around the world.

Another area of improvement for our Canadian Forces involves a serious investment on the part of the government to provide our forces with the tools they need to do the jobs to which they are assigned. The equipment deficiencies of our military are so extensive that I could go on at length highlighting the serious need for reinvestment. I simply do not have enough time to go down the almost endless list of things that need replacing.

Instead, I will touch on the more important equipment procurement priorities. I appreciate that the minister is listening to my remarks. Perhaps during questions and answers he could bring the House and Canadians, who are watching the debate, up to speed on where we stand with procurement of some of the essential needs of our armed forces.

I, like so many others, have been going on ad nauseam about the maritime helicopter project. It still serves as the best example of a bungled procurement project to replace the fleet of aging Sea King helicopters. Our navy works tirelessly maintaining these aircraft to ensure they are safe and available for use when they are needed. The cost to keep these helicopters in the air well past their shelf lives is in the tens of millions of dollars a year.

For the past 10 years, ever since the government came to power in 1993, the pilots who fly these aircraft and the technicians who work to keep them in the air have been waiting patiently for their government to purchase new replacements. Needless to say, if the outgoing Prime Minister had not, "with a single stroke of his pen,"

cancelled the original replacement contract, our service personnel would not have been left waiting for new aircraft and we would not be continuing to spend outrageous sums of money in an attempt to keep 40 year old helicopters in the air.

Likewise, the air force is confronting a similar problem with its primary workhorse aircraft that we continue to deploy around the globe, the C-130 Hercules. Currently, two-thirds of the fleet has been grounded periodically due to maintenance problems. The bulk of these planes, similar to the Sea Kings, are approaching 40 years in service.

Has the government stepped forward to address this serious problem? I would argue, not really. Instead of putting plans in place to purchase new replacement aircraft, the Minister of National Defence is scrounging for used parts, specifically airframes and the shells of the aircraft to keep them in the air.

An hon. member: Unbelievable.

Mr. Jay Hill: One of my colleagues said, "unbelievable". I cannot think of a better word.

I used to farm out in the real world before I became a federal politician. I farmed for some 20 years. My brother and I, when we were farming our 3,000 acres in the Peace country, recognized that to do the job we had to constantly upgrade our equipment if we were to have any hope of being able to get the crop in on time and get it off on time in the fall. All the armed forces is asking is for something similar.

If we were to have run our farm the way the government runs the Canadian armed forces, we would have been farming with 40 year old little tractors held together with duct tape, binder twine and baling wire. However we did not. We recognized a cost to doing business and we upgraded continually.

● (1230)

A few weeks ago it came to light that the equipment problems of our air force had compromised its ability to carry out the primary function of a maritime border patrol. The Minister of National Defence has resorted to looking to private companies to conduct patrols of our maritime borders because of a lack of money and equipment resources to carry out this function. The most disturbing part of it all was the admission by the defence minister that his department was actually doing this.

Perhaps now is as good a time as any to remind the government of its chronic bad luck when dealing with contractors. I believe it was not too long ago a former minister of defence had to send out a military crew to forcefully board and seize an ocean freighter on the high seas that refused to return Canadian military equipment to port.

For our current defence minister to see no problem with a contractor carrying out a primary national security function, I find deeply disturbing.

The last piece of equipment I will mention today has received quite a bit of media attention in recent days. I am referring to the Ilus scout car, which in its own right has garnered a lengthy history of political interference up until the very end, leading to the delay of its replacement.

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Almost 20 years ago the Liberal government of the day decided to purchase the Iltus, despite concerns raised about the vehicle by the army at the time. These jeeps were originally to be built by the supplier in Germany at a cost of \$26,500 each. The only problem with this was no jobs were to be created in Canada. At a 250% premium, the government decided to have the Iltus built in Canada by Bombardier at a cost of \$84,000 per vehicle. For that much money, we could have purchased the larger armoured Humvees the army wanted, but instead we received a vehicle with no armour protection and a canvas cover and doors.

I am dismayed to say that I and others have been remiss in referring to these vehicles as jeeps. I have been contacted by DaimlerChrysler and told it resents that, and justifiably so. These are not Jeeps. Jeep is a trademark of that company. I am a proud owner of two Jeeps. I have a Grand Cherokee Jeep in the riding and a TJ Jeep here in Ottawa, so I do not want to demean the good reputation and name of Jeep by referring to the Iltus as a jeep.

The Iltus has been slated for replacement since the mid-1990s, yet today we still find them in use within an active theatre of operations. At the outset of this procurement project, four reputable suppliers were interested in furnishing our land forces with new vehicles. However true to form, the Liberal government once again interfered in the procurement process to ensure there were political gains to be made. As a result, there is only one supplier remaining, which will probably be awarded the contract by default.

The remaining suppliers withdrew their bids on the project because of the unacceptable political interference. The most troubling legacy from this interference is that we are no longer afforded the luxury of choosing the best vehicle from a selection of choices. We only have one supplier willing to put up with the government's nonsense.

If the government truly wishes to end its reputation of neglecting our Canadian forces, it needs to demonstrate a true commitment to our military on a variety of fronts. This commitment must be principled and has to be backed up with action and financial resources. With a strong military, Canada can take its rightful place on the international stage once again as a peaceful nation willing to step forward to not only help those in need, but to promote and defend the democratic principles we all too often unfortunately take for granted here at home.

Currently, this is not the case. Canadians have been witness to their nation's declining reputation on the international stage. Canada is no longer a world leader in peacekeeping. We now rank behind more than 30 other countries in the world on the UN list. Due to the overextension of our Canadian forces, Canada is forced to hastily withdraw forces from Bosnia and the Golan Heights in order to meet our commitments in Afghanistan.

At home, Canadians are watching their federal government remain absolutely silent on one of the most important developments affecting our homeland security with the American's implementation of the ballistic missile defence program. The member for LaSalle—Émard, who is patiently waiting to take the keys for 24 Sussex, refuses to indicate his support or opposition to the program, unless the minister can inform me otherwise today. The ballistic missile

defence program is set to begin the initial phases of implementation as early as next year.

• (1235)

I just came back from Cheyenne Mountain in Colorado Springs where I had some great briefings with Norad. I can tell members that Norad is in jeopardy if we do not opt into this thing wholeheartedly and work with the Americans to provide continental security through the missile defence program.

My time is over. I would like to conclude by reiterating our support for Bill C-37. However, as I have touched upon, much more needs to be done on many other fronts to improve our Canadian armed forces.

• (1240)

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member raised many issues and asked for my response. Could I ask how much time I have?

The Deputy Speaker: If the Chair interpreted the number of members indicating they wanted to ask questions, the Chair, if I may use the term in a non-partisan fashion, will be liberal with its time with the clock. I will divide the time evenly. There is a 10 minute period for questions or comments, so let us start with five minutes for the Minister of National Defence, if he should use up all that five minutes.

Hon. John McCallum: Mr. Speaker, five minutes will be plenty. I would like to respond to two aspects of the member's speech. He covers a broad range of topics, much of which, quite naturally, I would disagree with.

For example, on ballistic missile defence, the talks with the Americans have been ongoing through the summer. I am told these talks are progressing well, so this is on stream. However, in my very brief minutes I want to address two of the themes he raised. The first of these themes is the tools to do the job and the second is the human dimension.

No one believes more strongly than I do that we must, as a government, provide our soldiers with the tools to do the job when we put them in harm's way. With regard to Afghanistan, that is why from the very start I have made absolutely certain that everything requested in terms of equipment was delivered on time. This will also be true with the request for additional armoured vehicles, which was made last week. Those will be delivered exactly as requested and on time.

More generally, we received an \$800 million increase in our base budget in the last budget and \$160 million of this I have devoted to our capital program. So our capital program is larger; moreover, it is more stable. Whereas in the past, with an unsustainable budget, we had to dip into the capital budget to finance current operations, this is no longer the case. For the first time in many years, the department has engaged in a long term capital planning project with greater stability in the budget and greater dollars. I have been participating actively in this.

Government Orders

I will just refer very briefly to two issues the hon. member raises. One is the replacement of the helicopter. Clearly, as I have said in the House many times, it is a very high priority for me to replace that helicopter as fast as possible. To that end, early in my time as defence minister I changed from a two contract system to a one contract system. All the stakeholders agree that this move increased the speed of delivery while at the same time it reduced risk. I have made it a top priority. I have told the department this: that in the short run, we must increase the serviceability of the Hercules and, in the medium term, the capacity. Progress has been made and we are working on this matter.

On the second theme, the human condition, when I first became defence minister I had limited experience with the military. It did not take me long to discover from first-hand observation and conversations that these wonderful people do a fantastic job for our country and put their lives on the line for us, as we have seen so sadly in recent times, and I wish to do what I can within my power to improve the living conditions of the military and their families.

I might say, and here I give some praise to my predecessor, that much has been done over the last five to ten years to improve those living conditions. Salaries have been increased substantially. The health care system has been improved. Family resource centres have been increased in number and in quality. Yes, there remains more to be done. There always does. But we as a government have put the people first over the last five to ten years, and I think a dispassionate observer would agree that the quality of life of our men and women in the Canadian Forces has improved in a significant way. This bill we are about to pass will move in that direction.

Finally, the hon. member mentioned Major Bruce Henwood. This was a personal initiative of mine. When I discovered that Major Bruce Henwood was denied his \$200,000 or \$300,000 in compensation for losing his legs, because he was a major rather than a colonel, I thought that made no sense. I spent quite a few months, while facing quite a lot of resistance in the bureaucracy, to change that anomaly, so that from now on anyone in the Canadian Forces, whether a private, a corporal, a colonel or a general, who loses his or her legs in a military situation would receive this compensation. I felt very strongly myself that this was absolutely wrong. It had to be changed. The opposition agreed with me, for which I am thankful, and we got that changed. As of now, both retroactively and going into the future, a person who loses his or her legs will receive that settlement irrespective of rank.

• (1245)

In conclusion, I think that both my predecessor and now I myself did and do take the human condition of the men and women of the Canadian Forces very seriously and, while there is always work to do, we have made significant progress over the last ten years. This bill we are about to pass is one further piece of evidence of that commitment and that progress we continue to make.

Mr. Jay Hill: Mr. Speaker, I first want to say, and I mean this sincerely, I appreciate that the Minister of National Defence remained in the House, listened to my remarks and obviously took them to heart. Even though he said, by his own admission, that he disagrees with much of what I said, that does not detract from the fact that I, as a member of the opposition, appreciate that he remained in the House and addressed my concerns. I only wish that

more ministers would learn from that, would make themselves available to the opposition during debate in the House of Commons and respond in a good way to the questions, and would put forward the opposite arguments where they are to be put forward.

Very quickly, I want to try to address a few of the points the minister raised.

On missile defence, the minister states that it is on stream. On stream? This has been 20 years in the making. I support the fact that at least we are talking about it and I commend the minister for at least moving the ball that far, but I think we should have public statements made on where we stand, and certainly the member for LaSalle—Émard, as the incoming leader of the Liberal government, should be making public statements on where he stands on that issue. Surely after 20 years he has decided where he stands on it if he wants to be the prime minister of the country.

Next is the request for additional armoured vehicles. One of the reasons I raised the issue of the Iltis, not only in my speech but over the past number of weeks since that unfortunate tragedy, is that the fact remains: if the government had replaced them when they were due to be replaced four or five years ago, and in fact even then they were overdue to be replaced, they would not be in theatre in Afghanistan. We would not have those vehicles there. We would have something better than those vehicles: something more dependable and safer.

As I said, and as the minister admitted, the investigation is still ongoing into that unfortunate tragedy. We do not yet know all the ramifications of that particular incident. Maybe it will be shown that it would not have mattered what those two soldiers were riding in on that particular day; maybe, unfortunately and tragically, they would have been killed anyway. But we do know that in that particular vehicle, they had no chance, none. My argument, and it remains valid, I believe, is that had we replaced those vehicles, had we moved as a nation and, in his defence, before this minister was minister, and had the government moved as a government and replaced those vehicles with something like the armoured Humvees the Americans use, their chances of survival would have been much higher. I stand by that.

Yes, we saw an improvement last year with some \$800 million in the defence budget. We on this side lauded that. We recognized, though, that it was insufficient. I think even the minister recognized that. He would have liked to have had more. Much more needs to be done on this. We have to allocate more resources for our Canadian armed forces. He referred to \$160 million in the capital expenditure budget; it is simply not enough. I think the minister himself would admit that it is not enough. There are too many items in our inventory that are long overdue for replacement.

Government Orders

Referring to the helicopters, I wrote down what the minister said. Basically, he said as fast as it can be accomplished. He is trying to move expeditiously and it remains a number one priority. There again, similar to missile defence, it was ten years ago that this Prime Minister, this outgoing Prime Minister, with a single stroke of his pen, cancelled those helicopters, the EH-101s. Since then, for ten years the government has been trying to rig the procurement process so that the EH-101 and the models that have replaced it do not qualify. It has been reducing the requirements and reducing the criteria to try, for political reasons, to get other helicopters to meet the requirements, so that the government and the Prime Minister do not have to be embarrassed by ten years later buying virtually the same helicopter with the improved avionics, which we should have had ten years ago.

● (1250)

The last thing: put the people first. I would argue that sadly there are far too many examples which show that much more needs to be done. Yes, improvements have been made, and I concede that to the minister, but much more needs to be done. I used one example, that of the upcoming rent increases for many of our Canadian armed forces families. These are young families. At a time when we are at war on terror, many of these people are deployed overseas. They are under an incredible amount of stress and anxiety and, at this very time, the government is going to increase the rent on their houses. They are not even sure if mom or dad is going to come home. Something is wrong here, and then the minister turns around and says the government is putting people first. I do not think so.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-37 today. I will start by saying that I will try to devote most of my speech to the pension fund. I think that is the issue today, not necessarily equipment, although I think that is part of it. Indeed, quality of life for the Canadian Forces also depends a great deal on their equipment, government decisions and especially the perception that Quebecers and Canadians have of the Canadian Forces.

Unfortunately, I am among those who say that the true worth of the Canadian Forces is not being recognized. The debate is often on the wrong track and centres on equipment or money. Yet, goodness knows, for a few years now we have been pushing for the adoption of a new national defence policy that would set out the challenges, guidelines and parameters for government funding. This could influence the purchase of equipment and change our behaviour on the international stage.

I think this is all closely linked. As I was saying, the true worth of the Canadian Forces is not recognized. I know this first hand. I had the opportunity to train with the Royal 22^e Régiment in Valcartier; the soldiers were being sent to Bosnia on relief. One's view depends on whether one is inside or outside the ranks.

I had a rather full week: the troops got up at sunrise, and went to bed very late in the evening after all the physical and psychological training that comes with preparing for a dangerous mission. Spending a day with the Royal 22^e Régiment preparing for an international peace mission makes one realize this is not fun and games.

I have also seen the PPCLI at work in my riding, during the ice storm. They did not come as tourists. These men and women spent their time clearing roads and chopping wood for those without power. They worked from sunup to sundown. When they left, I told the PPCLI soldiers that we would never forget them. That is why, from time to time in my speeches, I talk about the PPCLI to express my admiration for these individuals.

Training is one thing, but taking part in operations is completely different. I took part in two. As I just mentioned, I accompanied the ninth rotation to Bosnia. So, there had been other rotations before I went. Some of the people taking part in the ninth rotation had already taken part in the fourth and fifth rotation.

Over there, we can see the magnitude of what happened during the war between the Croats and the Bosnians. One out of every three houses has no roof; there were huge losses of life. The soldiers spoke about the Canadian camps being shelled. Once, they were called to go get children at a school and take them back to the camp so they would be under military protection, but then they were informed that the children were not allowed in the camp. When the soldiers went back out after the bombing, the children had all died outside the walls to the Canadian camp.

There are not just physical dangers, but also enormous emotional stress. That is why, now, it has been determined that post-traumatic stress disorder is a direct result of this kind of situation.

I also accompanied the minister to Eritrea and Ethiopia where the two camps were separated by an international boundary. I saw dead bodies lying amidst mine fields, left there because apparently there was no time to recover the bodies and the whole area needed to be demined to do it. This creates a great deal of insecurity within the Canadian Forces.

We often think that they are tough people, but they are human beings, too. We need only observe their friendship with the local population as they offer a little solace for the horrors these people live through day by day.

● (1255)

Therefore we think that debating this bill to improve the retirement conditions for Canadian Forces pensioners is a step in the right direction. Recruitment is not the only thing that counts. I believe that the current problem is that young people thinking of enlisting have a choice between private enterprise or the Canadian Forces, a federal institution.

They often decide to enlist in the forces for adventure. Nevertheless, some basic conditions must be met: the salary must be good enough and the pension plan as well. I think that the bill before us will improve the situation in many ways.

Government Orders

I think the government has been rather slow in dealing with the reservists. But, as the saying goes, “better late than never.” In its 1998 report on quality of life in the Canadian Forces, the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs recommended “that the Department of National Defence pursue initiatives to put in place a real pension plan for the Reserves,” because they were not previously eligible for pensions.

Consequently, special attention is being given to creation of a pension plan for reservists. Clearly, reservists may have other jobs. Now, if they want to re-enlist, the time they spent in the militia or reserve will count towards a pension at the end of their career, which is very good. I would like to point out how important reservists are, and will be in future, because people wanting to make a career in the Armed Forces are not exactly beating down the doors of recruiting offices.

I know that considerable efforts are under way at the present time to recruit people. In fact, there is a Canadian Forces recruiting centre in my riding and it is always busy. This is interesting, but when people enlist they need to know what to expect when they retire 10, 15, 20 or 25 years down the line. This is, in my opinion, important.

Now reservists will have the possibility of accumulating pensionable time, so that when they end their career, be it in the Armed Forces or elsewhere, they will have a slightly better pension plan than before, as they would in the federal public service.

Speaking of the importance of reservists, I again think of Valcartier. Several battalions were deployed to Bosnia during my rotation. One of these was wholly comprised of members of the reserve who had been given leave from their jobs and had signed on for a specific length of time for a mission in Bosnia.

They deserve much credit for this, because they sometimes run into problems getting their jobs back. Employers are more or less obliged to let them go, but when they come back, they sometimes find out someone has taken their place. To improve the reform we have before us, far more attention would have to be paid to members of the reserve, because they will become more and more necessary if we accept the fact that there will be fewer and fewer career soldiers.

Consequently, any improvement that can be made to the situation for the reserve strikes us as very important, and Bill C-37 does so by improving their pension possibilities.

There were other difficulties. For instance, the vesting period, which will be shorter. Members had to serve for 10 years to qualify for a pension. The minimum period for qualifying will now be two years. This encourages people to say, “I will give it a try and, if it does not work, I will at least qualify for a pension after two years”.

Previously, members who became disheartened or left lost their pension entitlement. They needed 10 years of accumulated service to qualify. Sometimes these individuals spoke of the forces in less than complimentary terms to those around them, which might have discouraged others from joining the Canadian Forces.

I think there is real improvement. As far as pension portability is concerned, this legal sounding term refers to the ability members of the armed forces now have to transfer their pensions into their

registered retirement savings plans. They could not do that before, but now they can.

● (1300)

This is encouraging to people, who think, “Should I ever leave the forces and be entitled to a pension, I will transfer this money into another retirement plan. This way, I will not lose it”. I feel this is one of the strengths of this bill.

Also, with respect to pension eligibility no longer being tied to service, this will apply to reservists as well as to members of the regular force.

Until now, a member who enlisted for five years and later decided not to re-enlist—as I said earlier, there was a provision requiring that they serve 10 years—lost his or her pension. The same was true for reservists. Those who left the forces, saying they had had enough, lost their entitlement. Today, eligibility is no longer tied to a period of service. A reservist will be able to say, “I have had it with the Canadian Forces. I will take a break for a year or two. I have other obligations right now, but I would like to come back later”. Even if the period of service is not continuous, it will be possible to continue accumulating pensionable service, picking up where he or she left off.

This is an idea that would definitely be of interest to people, because it is much more flexible. This way, they would not be saying, after 5 or 10 years of service, “I have no pension rights. That is it. If I re-enlist, I start at zero again.”

In my opinion, this eliminates a problem that goes beyond recruitment. Of course, the federal government cut back funding to the army in the early 1990s, so that we have dropped from an army numbering 80,000 to one numbering around 50,000. As a consequence, we must now emphasize recruitment. What good does it do to plunge into recruiting while people are leaving by the back door, and we have no retention measures? These measures before us today are retention measures, to encourage people to stay in the forces.

Now, as for the pension, new people can be eligible after 25 years of service. That is another retention measure. It did raise a few questions when we read the bill for the first time. I had an excellent briefing by the Canadian Forces on the subject. Their people came to my office to explain what happens to those now covered by the plan, that is, those who have been in for 18 or 19 years and who were planning to leave in a year or two, that is, after 20 years, which is the current minimum. The question had come up: “Are we going to tell these people, ‘You cannot leave after all. You cannot leave in a year or two because we have changed the law. From now on, it will be 25 years.’” So, they told us that it would be optional for those people. That is very interesting, because there are people who have served 18 or 19 years in the army, and I know very well that they are keen to retire. They know that after 20 years they are entitled to a full pension.

Government Orders

They have told me: "We are against this Mr. Bachand. You cannot expect us to put off our retirement for five years. We have made plans: we were going to leave the Canadian Forces in a year or two". The bill makes this optional. Current members will have the choice of retiring after 20 or 25 years. It will be their choice and there will be no penalty.

Nonetheless, a newcomer to the Canadian Forces will certainly know from the outset that he has to serve in the forces for 25 years. This is not a double standard. People have said to me, "Claude, be careful. It is like a grandfather clause. Some will have more benefits than others". That is not the case here. Those who are already in the army can leave after 20 years of service or, if they wish, they can serve five additional years under the legislation. However, new arrivals know that it is 25 years of service. Consequently, when they sign their contract, they do so with full knowledge of the facts. It is no different than those who signed a contract 20 years ago. They knew at the time that in 20 years they could retire. Those who sign a contract today know they can retire after 25 years.

This is also a retention measure because there are people who have served in the army for 19 or 20 years who would like to continue. Letting them accumulate more years of pensionable service, because they would be able to serve for five more years, would be very good because it would build up the pension fund.

●(1305)

Some people like being in the army, while others like it less. In general, however, this ensures that everyone can be satisfied to some extent. This will also satisfy the fundamental needs of the Canadian Forces.

Now, I must warn the government, because terrible things have happened with regard to this veterans' bill. The minister said that he supported the adoption of amendments to the legislation and the regulations. Since there was not enough money, he decided to set aside measures that must be approved, debated and voted on in the House.

In terms of veterans, the government decided to proceed through regulations. This means that the governor in council or cabinet will define the parameters. Also this bill leaves the way open for regulations. The government should be extremely careful here. When regulations are used to bypass parliamentarians, democracy is weakened.

As MPs, we receive representations from all sorts of people, especially when they know we are our party's critic for a given portfolio. Since there is a strong military presence in my riding, many service members come to see me about issues concerning Bill C-37 before us, and veterans affairs as well. When they hear that people are treated differently because regulatory measures were taken instead of parliamentary or legislative measures, some of them take offence.

A case in point concerns veterans. Ten thousand widows were told they would be getting a substantial benefit in the form of a veterans allowance, the veterans being their husbands who are now deceased, to allow them to keep their homes. They will receive money for housekeeping and groundkeeping. We are talking about 10,000 widows who were told that from now on and for as long as they live

in their home, they will be getting this allowance, but the widows of other veterans will not.

There is a major problem when 10,000 women are entitled to assistance and 23,000 others are not. I do hope this situation will be corrected. We in the Bloc Québécois are working on an action plan to ensure that the 66% of women who are widows of veterans are not discriminated against.

A measure that does not help people who need to stay in their homes looks a bit unfair to me. And that is not even counting the fact that when they leave because they are no longer able to keep up their homes, they often end up in long term care. From then on, looking after these people is the province's responsibility, not the federal government's. And yet it is a federal jurisdiction. For once, when the federal government has jurisdiction, perhaps it could look after it properly instead of trying to interfere in all sorts of jurisdictions in Quebec.

Thus, we must warn the government. If there are amendments to this bill, or if, in the future, there are amendments with regard to amounts of money, eligibility, or qualifying periods, they must be brought before the House in the form of a legislative amendment so that the members of Parliament can discuss them. That way, when we get questions from our constituents, we will be able to give them answers and we will not be at a loss.

It was our distinct impression that all widows were going to get help, because the minister had announced on May 12 that he would be ensuring that all widows would benefit from changes for the better, but that was not so. Over the summer they likely realized that the bill would be a bit steep, so they settled on a figure of \$69 million, a reallocation, rather than the total measure, which would have included all spouses and likely would have come to \$200 million. The government did not have that kind of money.

We appealed to the minister to ensure that the next budget would include enough money to provide this coverage to everyone. There is one condition, however: that something as important as this not be done by regulation, but rather by legislation.

As for the bill as a whole which we have before us today, we are very pleased to see that the conditions and quality of life of those who will be retiring from the army will be improved. That, I think, was important. Not only important, but helpful for retaining people in the Forces. Not only will they be more interested in enlisting, but they will be more interested in making a career in the Canadian Forces because of all these measures.

Government Orders

• (1310)

[English]

Mr. Gary Schellenberger (Perth—Middlesex, PC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour and a privilege to speak today to a matter of great importance to the men and women of the Canadian armed forces and the Canadian armed forces reserve.

The legislation has the support of members on both sides of the House precisely because it improves the standard of living of our men and women in uniform.

I have great personal respect for the Canadian armed forces and the Canadian armed forces reserve, as I believe their personnel are national heroes. They undertake the defence of our freedom and the protection of our borders without concern for the obvious risks involved.

In return, I believe we owe them the best possible heroes' reward. Part of that reward is to ensure we provide them with the type and kind of equipment they need to complete their missions. We have an obligation to guarantee that they have the resources they need, not only to discharge their duty but to return home safely.

That is why so many of my colleagues in the House insist that we must increase the defence budget. My colleague, the member for Saint John, has done everything in her power to ensure that our military is properly equipped. She is not alone, and I want to praise the work of the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs for all the work it has done.

The renovation of the military and reserve pension schemes is something that many would argue has been a long time coming. The Canadian armed forces and the Canadian armed forces reserve of the present day face many different challenges than those our military faced in the past.

Since the September 11 attacks, our military has changed both in terms of the missions it is given and the members it must recruit. Any effective pension plan must reflect these changes.

The military pension scheme must also reflect the fact that many of its recruits join up at a very young age, and that they are subjected to some of the most rigorous training imaginable. It is my understanding and belief that all these concerns, and more, are addressed in the legislation now under consideration by the House.

The legislation recognizes that our armed forces reserve is being called upon to take a greater role in our national security. As my colleagues have said, the backbone of our military is the militia. This fact has not been previously recognized in the military pension scheme. Under the legislation, those necessary changes will be made into law.

Many of the changes are administrative in nature but underscore the more important policy concerns that our military men and women have with the administration of their pensions. Clearing up this red tape will only help in making the Canadian armed forces a more attractive option for many young Canadians who might be considering a career in the military.

As the House already knows, our military is having a difficult time recruiting the necessary number of men and women needed to

handle the burden of missions now upon us. The September 11 attacks and subsequent war on terror attacks have had a marked effect on recruitment efforts, as patriotic young Canadians have answered the call of their country. However, stories about how Canadian soldiers and veterans are forced to fight with this government for the benefits that they have so clearly earned, gives them pause.

The operational tempo, that is to say the ratio of time spent by Canadian Forces personnel in deployed missions, has increased dramatically in the same period that the number of CF personnel was in decline.

Any businessman will tell us that when demand exceeds supply, the end result is a shortage. When there is a shortage in our military, then the security of the country is weakened. Our ability to offer assistance to the world is limited. Our military ends up serving longer, with fewer rotations. With fewer rotations the men and women of our military have less time to train here at home and less time to be with their families.

• (1315)

We have just recently witnessed the very tragic and very dangerous aspect of military missions. Two Canadian soldiers in the prime of their lives were taken from us in Afghanistan. We can honour their memory and their service by improving the conditions of those they have left behind.

My colleague from Saint John has repeatedly said that when it comes to our military we cannot play politics. However I do not believe it would be political for me to say that we need to improve the state of our military in light of current events. It would not be political because so many of my colleagues on both sides of this chamber have said the same thing. It would not be political when an unbiased publication, *Jane's Defence Weekly*, has written that spending cuts to our defence budget have caused irreparable damage to our military.

We have to take action now. We need to ensure that the military has an increased budget that remains stable in years to come. Stable funding is the cornerstone of an effective military, just as a stable pension is the cornerstone of personal financial security for our military men and women.

Today I am proud to stand in support of making the changes necessary to improve the lives of those who risk their lives for us. Our military's strongest asset is flesh and blood, not steel. Whenever we speak of national defence, we must remember that we speak of sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers.

Our goal here today is to improve the standard of living for our military personnel for years to come. I believe, given that task, there is no reason that we should not give it our unanimous support.

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today, on behalf of the NDP, to Bill C-37, an act to amend the Canadian Forces Superannuation Act and to make consequential amendments to other acts.

Government Orders

I am also pleased to join with members of all parties by way of indicating our support for the bill. I hope the bill will proceed expeditiously and that the benefits, which will accrue to members of the armed forces as a result of the bill, will come into effect as soon as possible.

Many members have already gone into detail, including the minister, the critic for the official opposition and others, as to what all is contained in the bill, and I see no need to repeat that.

It is important I think to highlight at least one of the changes, and that has to do with providing pension benefits to full time reservists. This is something that has been advocated for a long time and I am glad to see that the minister has been able to make this happen, as, I might add, he has been able to make a number of things happen since he has become the minister. I do not agree with the minister on everything, particularly when it comes to national missile defence—and I might have more to say about that later—but we have had some legislation come forward during the time of his tenure, shall we say, in which things that were long overdue are finally happening, and Bill C-50 is one of those things.

There are still other things that could be done to make life easier for those who are concerned about our reserve forces. Recruitment is still a problem and retention is a problem once they are recruited. I am sure the minister is aware of those problems.

I see the minister is in the House. Maybe afterward he could clear up something that came to my attention, because he may have an opportunity in questions and comments to say something. One of the rumours running through the reserves is that the program that provides some educational benefit to people joining the reserve, whereby they get help with their university education, may be cut. People who are in command positions within the reserve are concerned about this. They see this as an important recruiting tool to be able to offer young Canadians who may be considering joining the reserve.

When I asked that question this morning, when members of the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs were at DND, I was told there was no thought being given to cutting that particular program. It would be good if the minister could confirm that and that it be communicated to people in the reserve. There is no sense having rumours floating around that are unfounded, but, if they are well-founded, we would like to know that as well.

The minister said that he wanted to make the forces, both regular and reserve, the employer of choice. Certainly bringing pension benefits up to par with that which is offered in the rest of the public service and the private sector would be part of that. The bill would go some way toward creating the context that the minister desires.

However I certainly would agree with the official opposition critic who talked about the quality of life for our Canadian Forces members while at the same time tolerating this increase in rent. If we kind of take with one hand what we have given with the other, people are not stupid. They do not come away feeling good about it. If the idea is to make people in the Canadian Forces feel more appreciated than they have over the last several years, and to respond to the quality of life report and to deal with some of the things that led in the past to Canadian Forces families having to access food

banks, et cetera, then I would hope that the minister would reconsider this rent increase as other things have been reconsidered.

• (1320)

For instance, at one point it looked like a fait accompli that supply and other functions would be contracted out to a British company. I cannot remember the technical name. I know people in the forces called it kibbles and bits, or something like that. That decision was rescinded and the work has not been contracted out.

There is room for flexibility here. If the minister could see the wisdom of not proceeding with this, that would be great.

While we are on contracting out, although it is not quite relevant, I would hope that the Minister of Industry might see the wisdom of rescinding the contract to Lockheed Martin for the Canadian census. It gives one pause that if we can contract out the census to a big American multinational, it is a wonder we are not contracting out elements of our military to an American corporation. We hope we will never see that day.

Those are some of the things I wanted to put on the record. Other members have tried to turn this into a larger debate about defence spending. Of course that is appropriate to the degree that the Chair allows it. I certainly would not want to be the one who would try and do that given my longstanding respect for relevance.

Others have mentioned it and were not chastised. I might also want to put on the record that we too abhor the delay in replacing the Sea King helicopters. I was here when that contract was cancelled. The EH-101s were first proposed by the Conservative government. We had concerns about that contract.

I would hope that anyone who was here at the same time as I was would say that if we had any inkling of the fact that cancelling the EH-101 contract would mean that 10 years later we still would not be anywhere near obtaining a replacement for the Sea King helicopter, we would have said to buy the things. Whatever it was that was objectionable about them, in my opinion it has become far more objectionable to leave our Canadian Forces in the twilight zone that they have been in with respect to the Sea King helicopters for the past 10 years.

This is a dangerous situation. It is a situation that has nothing to do with helicopters and has everything to do with Liberal politics in terms of the original cancellation, but more blameworthy is the fact that the Liberals have taken 10 years and they still have not figured out which one of their friends will benefit from the contract. Until the Liberals can figure that out, it is the people in the Canadian Forces who have to fly this obsolete equipment. That is shameful.

At the heart of this is a very shameful reality. The reality is that defence contracts in this country can be held hostage to ongoing political manoeuvring of the sort that we have seen relating to the Sea King helicopters. It is not only with respect to helicopters that this happens, but this is one of the more glaring examples of how politics can hold up something which should have been proceeded with expeditiously.

Government Orders

If the Liberals want to cancel a contract, that is fine. However, they have to make up their minds about what the new helicopter will be like and get them on stream and into the hands of the people who need them.

The member from the Bloc Québécois said he could not resist the opportunity to speak highly and offer praise to the Canadian armed forces who were helping out during the ice storm in Quebec. I certainly welcome his remarks in that regard. Likewise, I want to take the opportunity to be praiseworthy of the members of the Canadian armed forces who were in Manitoba at the time of the flood in 1997. They were camped out in tents in the parking lot at the East End Community Club in Transcona. That is where they were bivouacked. I had an opportunity to visit with many of them at that time. I certainly want to add my commendation for the work they did at that time and for the ongoing work they do with respect to catastrophes, whether they be floods, fires, ice storms or whatever the case may be.

● (1325)

The minister did say in his remarks that the national missile defence system was on stream. What does on stream mean? We have made our opposition to Canadian participation in the American proposed and American led national missile defence system very clear on a number of occasions in the House. It is part and parcel of what the government has always said it was against, which is the weaponization of space. We are disappointed that the government seems to be proceeding on this without really making it clear what it is up to.

I would hope that members of the Alliance who seem to agree with national missile defence would agree that there is a procedural inadequacy here. If the government is going to participate in national missile defence, it should come before the House and make that absolutely clear. Perhaps it could bring forward a motion and have the House vote on it. It should do something which at least would nod in the direction of parliamentary participation, of parliamentary approval or disapproval of this very significant step.

As New Democrats, our main quarrel with the Minister of National Defence at this time is national missile defence by stealth. First of all the government was not going to have anything to do with it, then it was discussing it, and now it is on stream. This is not the way these kinds of major decisions should be made.

We certainly hope that the member for LaSalle—Émard, who is certainly on stream to becoming the next prime minister of Canada, will make his position clear on this issue so we can have a debate with him and with those who support him about the position that he has taken.

It is pretty obvious that the position of the new prime minister will be one of support for national missile defence because he is making noises that somehow we have to kiss and make up with Washington for our brief shining moment of independence when it came to the war in Iraq. This is one of the concerns that we have had and one which I notice the former minister of foreign affairs has. The price to be paid for our independence on the war in Iraq will be years of acquiescence, of making up, for that independence. It seems to us it was no coincidence that shortly after that the government began to move in the way it has on national missile defence.

I will end there. Perhaps the minister will have an opportunity in questions and comments to respond to one of the things that I raised earlier in my remarks.

● (1330)

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to respond to the specific question raised by the hon. member regarding education.

As he knows, I myself have spent 18 years in the field of education. The education advisory board met last week and is trying to put a really strong focus on the importance of education and professional development in the Canadian Forces.

With that as a background, I am happy to confirm that there is absolutely no suggestion that the educational benefits that are currently provided for reservists are in any kind of jeopardy. This is not the case. I do not know where the rumour came from but rumours sometimes get around. I am telling the member unequivocally that those benefits are there to stay. We will try to get the word out to anybody who has doubts on this matter.

Mrs. Betty Hinton (Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the member from Strathcona a simple question, but there is a preamble to it.

He mentioned the floods in Manitoba, and I can certainly feel for him. I appreciate the fact that the military was there. My other colleague from the Bloc mentioned the ice storms in Quebec and I appreciate that as well. I found myself in the position this summer of knowing first hand just how valuable the military is in a domestic crisis. Military personnel were in my riding for the fires this summer and I do not know how we would have done it without them. I truly do appreciate them.

The member from Strathcona and I have some philosophical differences regarding the issues of the Canadian military. I do think we are on side on one issue, which is that we have treated our military very poorly.

With regard to the missile defence system which he also raised, I would only say to him that from my perspective and my point of view, I have to look at things in reality. We have Alaska above us and the United States below us. Whether or not a missile shield goes in is almost a foregone conclusion. Perhaps he would disagree with me, but I would like to be a part of that decision making process since I am fairly aware it is going to happen regardless.

The question I would like to ask concerns the superannuation that we are discussing today. Although it is a very small step toward treating military personnel the way they deserve to be treated and honouring them for what they do for us in the country and what they do for us overseas, would the member agree that it is a step in the right direction? I would like to confirm that he and I are on the same page on this and we are going to support this bill.

Mr. Bill Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I do not want to be unkind but the hon. member should pay closer attention. I said right at the beginning that we supported the bill.

Government Orders

Also, the name of my riding is Winnipeg—Transcona, not Strathcona. Strathcona is in Edmonton. This is not an Alliance strategy for winning Winnipeg—Transcona, to confuse Transcona with Strathcona.

Seeing that the member brought this up, I would also say what the origin of the word Transcona is. It is not unrelated to Strathcona because the community of Transcona was created in 1909-10 when the railway shops in Transcona were built for the second transcontinental railway that was being built in our country at that time. Residents wondered what to call the community and it was suggested that it be a combination of transcontinental and Lord Strathcona, who was a founder of the railways. That is how the word Transcona came to be.

I thank the hon. member for the opportunity to give this little history lesson on the origin of the word Transcona but remind her that Strathcona is a community in Edmonton. She is not the first one to make that mistake, but I thought I should speak in a way that perhaps she would never make it again.

● (1335)

The Deputy Speaker: I heard something from somewhere in the House about relevance. I think we have just given it a whole new dimension.

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, earlier in debate between myself and the hon. Minister of National Defence, he referred to the fact that in his opinion the government that he represents has been very forthcoming with funds to replace equipment. In fact he was bragging about the \$160 million in last year's budget that was applied to the capital replacement program.

I note in today's *Ottawa Sun* in a story by Stephanie Rubec that our Prime Minister, who was in Kabul yesterday or the day before, criticized the military for having a never-ending wish list and for continually demanding more money. He is quoted as saying, "But it is never enough. They all need more. And they all have plans for more". He went on to say that we have the best equipment, that we are better equipped than anybody else.

Would my hon. colleague from the NDP care to comment upon yet the latest example of the Prime Minister of our country addressing an issue of the gross neglect of our military on behalf of his government? The Prime Minister is basically blaming them or suggesting that they are simply crybabies, that they have this never-ending wish list when what they really need is the proper equipment to protect our young men and women when they are stationed overseas in harm's way.

Mr. Bill Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I am sure it is the case that the armed forces, like any other organization, have a wish list. It is the job of politicians to decide what on that wish list is appropriate to provide and what is not. When it comes to the Canadian armed forces at the moment, there are many things on that wish list for which they should never have to wish. They should already have these things.

As I said earlier, one thing they should already have and for which they should not have to wish is a replacement for the Sea King helicopters. However there are many other things one would think would be just part of something that would happen in due course. I

have had people tell me that they have problems training people in the militia. Why? Because they have no ammunition.

This is not a debate about nuclear submarines. We are talking about people having bullets, rounds, call them whatever, so that when they point down the range something comes out of the end of the barrel. Something is going on when people say that it would be nice to be able to train people, but they only get issued two bullets per season or something like that. This is the kind of thing that makes a mockery of some of the things that are sometimes said about how well we look after our armed forces.

● (1340)

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there have been reports recently of the United States becoming so desperate to gain public support about the missile defence, or star wars program, that it has actually floated opportunities for the public to be involved. One suggestion that has come back, in terms of a national missile defence fund, is that the Americans use interceptor balloons to hit the missiles.

Could the government have made different decisions about the use of tax cuts, for example, those which have gone to a select few, and instead invested more into our military to provide the rightful resources? It is a matter of choices. Does the member feel the government has made the right choices?

Mr. Bill Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I say to my colleague that I do not feel the government has made the right choices. I think it has a habit of making the wrong choices.

However this is interesting. What kind of choices does the opposition make in terms of what it opposes and what it supports? Many times we have heard speeches from the official opposition and from the Conservatives. Of course now they are now one big happy family under the tutelage of Brian Mulroney. It is a wonderful thing to see the Alliance members have come back under the wing of Mr. Mulroney and the elite.

They have come crawling back with their heads hanging down saying that this is a terrible failure, that they are sorry and asking if they can come back. To see what has happened to the Alliance, makes the story of the prodigal son look somewhat tame. I do not want to get diverted.

The Deputy Speaker: I know the hon. member would also want to stay within the confines of relevancy.

Mr. Bill Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, the member's question was about choices. The fact of the matter is those people who are constantly complaining and whining about a lack of resources for our national defence forces are the same people who do not blink an eye when there are \$100 million in tax cuts and money goes to corporations and the wealthy in the country, money that would be much better spent on housing and other things for our armed forces.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Winnipeg—Transcona for the history lesson on the genesis of Transcona.

Government Orders

First, Bill C-37, which is an act to amend the Canadian Forces Superannuation Act, encompasses a number of things. I would note that substantively the House is in support of this bill. However a couple of points were raised. I heard the comments of the Bloc Québécois this morning on the transitional provisions with regard to those who are already under the current plan and with regard to the widows' benefits, of which I am not sure of the details. I will try to find out.

Just in summary, I would like to remind the House that the bill would make changes to the pension benefit scheme provided under the Canadian Forces Superannuation Act. The key features of the revised scheme are: first, a reduction of the minimum period for qualifying for a pension to two years; second, tying benefit eligibility to years of pensionable service rather than completion of a period of engagement in the Canadian Forces; and third, the provision of an immediate pension to a person who has completed 25 years of paid service in the Canadian Forces and has at least two years of pensionable service. There are also some consequential amendments or adjustments to other acts as a result of these proposed changes.

Again from the debate so far today, we certainly have broadened out the subject matter from pensions for our military and we have heard some very complimentary words about the quality of our Canadian Forces, but not from all. It really concerns me that in this place from time to time we tend to take advantage of the political opportunism to maybe joust on points not realizing that the families of our military are also listening to the debate. They are very interested in what is happening in this place as it relates to our military.

Canadians have heard that we have not taken care of our military personnel, that we do not pay them enough. We do not give them enough bullets to defend themselves. We do not give them the trucks or equipment they need. We do not do this or we do not do that. We do not have housing. After it is all said and done, we have run down the military so badly. It was never the intent, and I do not believe it is in fact the belief of members in this place. There is no question—

Mr. James Moore: Is the member for LaSalle—Énard going to do it?

Mr. Paul Szabo: Here is a Reformer who is going to throw in his two cents, but let us not forget that it was members of the Reform Party that were going to slash military spending. Now, *mea culpa*, they are back again, "Oh, yes, we have to do this". This is politics. It is not the reality of the military.

I had an opportunity in recent months to visit two of bases of our forces. Bagotville was one and Greenwood was another. I want to reiterate what members of the forces said to me as a visitor who was there to learn about what it was like to be in the military and what the concerns were.

When I was in Bagotville, I took the opportunity to meet some of the spouses of our military members. They did not talk about wanting more pay for their spouses' work. They talked about how difficult it was to lose spouses to a six month tour of duty, to have them come back for a short period and then maybe have them reassigned for another tour of duty. The spouses of our military members talked about the impacts on their families. They talked

about the unfortunate increase in the levels of domestic violence within the military family. They talked about the impact on the children who were living on the bases. They talked about the fact that our military personnel got medical care on the base while their families who lived on the base did not. They had to go into the town to get the public health care. They wondered why their entire family should not be handled by the same physician. These are the kinds of things about which they talked.

● (1345)

In Bagotville they were not complaining about housing. They were not complaining about salary. When I met these families altogether, there was significant pride in the military life. There was significant pride in the contribution which they were making to safety and security, not only of Canada but around the world. There was a professionalism that most Canadians would not see and would not appreciate.

When I was in Greenwood at the end of last summer, I was part of a military program where I lived in barracks. I ate with the pilots and crews. I did maritime patrol for a week. I have a new found respect for the military. I met people who were a variety of range in age, but to the people, the dedication, the pride, the professionalism, the need to be better at what they did was very evident across the board.

I can remember sitting in a simulator with many of them who were training. The aircraft they fly on maritime patrol are capable of dropping torpedoes. They simulate tracking submarines and they make decision. The public and members of Parliament should see our military personnel in their work. They are not always engaged in theatre; they are preparing for theatre. They are not always doing some things. One member dwelt on how many bullets they had. Quite frankly, for many of our military, the issue is the impact of six month tours of duty, extended periods of duty and what that does to put strain on the family life.

I wanted to raise that because it is really important for us to understand that our military personnel should not be talked about as inanimate objects. They are people. They are moms and dads. They have children. They have the same concerns, the same needs and the same wants as any other Canadian, but they are in a profession, and the significance of their profession to us is not in question. The issue is that they are there by their choosing, because of their pride, their dedication to their work, their professionalism and military service is what they want to do.

There is no question that there are cases where people have not been able to stay in their positions. Retention of military personnel has been a problem. Recruitment from time to time has been a problem. I do not believe it helps our cause to continue to treat military personnel as inanimate objects. The military is made up of human beings. They are heroes. They are Canadians.

I would hope, as the debate continues in this place, that in addition to maybe mentioning a couple of things about the bill, because the bill is pretty important, that we do in fact deal with this subject with a sensitivity which takes into account the fact families are listening to what their parliamentarians are saying about people in military life. They do not live in squalor. They do not live in poverty. They do not live without the benefits they are entitled to receive. The bill does enhance benefits.

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One of the Bloc members raised an issue about transitional provisions, that if people had planned to leave after 20 years and they had 18 years or 19 years in the military, this would cause them some problems. The member did not say, which he should have, that members under the transitional provisions would have an opportunity to stay under the existing plan and would start to collect their pensions after 20 years. They would not have to wait 25 years, as the members said.

• (1350)

Mathematically, if they stayed for an additional 5 years and got up to 25, and went under the new system, obviously their pension would be better.

One thing is for sure under this bill. No pensioner from the military would be worse off with this bill. Every pensioner from the military in fact would be better off as a consequence of this bill. For that reason alone, I am sure members in this place will be supporting Bill C-37.

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the member who just spoke said that the reform party would slash military spending.

These off-handed comments diminish credibility when they are not true. I want the member to be honest and cite one example from the debates in this House, or our policies, where we have ever advocated that. We have always defended the military, and we always will.

Our military is essential to our sovereignty as a nation. Our military is essential for the respect other nations will have for Canada. Our military is essential to the well-being of our nation in many other ways.

I have been here since 1993 and I know that the men and women in the military have been a priority for us, even when the budget deficit was a huge deficit.

I would like the member to stand and give me one example when we have ever advocated cutting the budget of the military.

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, maybe the member did not look at his own platform when he ran in 1993. If he were to look back at the platform document for the reform party, he would see.

I will agree with the member that we should constantly be vigilant about supporting our military for the respect that it has earned, not only in Canada but also abroad. In recent years, it has not been so much peacekeeping as it has been peacemaking. There is a transitory thing going on here, in terms of the military, particularly as it relates to post 9/11 incidents.

This is not the place, nor the time, for anybody in this place, quite frankly, to be describing the military as some sort of leper.

Our military has a great tradition. It has great support in this place, on all sides I believe. I would hope that all members would simply use the sensitivity that I am sure they have when they are speaking about the heroes in our Canadian military.

• (1355)

Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I have listened to the comments from the Liberal member. I

held the portfolio of defence critic for some 10 years and over that time I had the opportunity to observe what has happened to our military. Forced changes were placed upon the military due to dramatic cutbacks in budget of somewhere in the neighbourhood of 25% or 26%.

Of all the departments in Ottawa, the Liberals chopped the military the most, right to the bone. Why? Because they knew they could get away with it. Who was going to object? They were not telling the truth to the people in this country. We in opposition party were vigilant in pointing that out to Canadians right from the very onset.

We sat in opposition. We did not chop that budget. The government did. It put the military in the position that it is presently in.

I have a question for the member from Mississauga. If he believes that this party was not vigilant, what does he call his own party?

The Liberals are downright obnoxious and untrustworthy when it comes to looking after our military men and women.

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, in my own direct experience with the military at Bagotville, at Greenwood in Nova Scotia, and indeed some of the senior officers who I have met here, I have never, ever heard what the member has said from them.

I believe that I will accept the representations of the military directly, the men and women and the leadership of the military, that they have never, ever said such things about the government's actions with regard to the military.

The member knows that the base budget of the military is now up to \$800 million. Even the minister who spoke here today was complimented by the critic of the official opposition for being here and for taking the steps he has taken with regard to the Sea King helicopters and a number of other issues like—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. We will now proceed to statements by members. The hon. member for Hillsborough.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

HURRICANE JUAN

Mr. Shawn Murphy (Hillsborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on Monday September 29, at 3 a.m., the most devastating storm to hit Prince Edward Island in 40 years slammed into the central part of the province uprooting trees and cutting off power to most residents.

I rise today to express the gratitude of this House and the gratitude of all Islanders to the emergency workers whose tireless effort restored power and order to the province after hurricane Juan.

Within a short time, Charlottetown city employees, Maritime Electric staff and other emergency workers began the difficult task of cleaning up the mess. They worked so efficiently, despite the fact that many roads had been blocked by trees in the early morning, that 83% of island residents were able to get to the polls and cast their vote in the provincial election held that day.

On behalf of all Islanders, I want to thank all emergency crew workers for their tireless and dedicated service in the hours, days and weeks following hurricane Juan.

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• (1400)

2010 WINTER OLYMPICS

Mr. Andy Burton (Skeena, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the quest for a 2010 Winter Olympics mascot is underway and I want to assist in that task. In the Skeena riding region of northwestern British Columbia, there exists a rare species of black bear called the kermode.

This bear, known as muks-kum-ol by the Tsimshian people, is not an albino but actually a genetic white colour phase of the black bear. Found only in northwestern B.C., this animal would make a perfect mascot for the Vancouver/Whistler winter games.

What better promotion for an area of B.C. that deserves recognition and what better worldwide recognition for the Olympics than an animal as a mascot that is totally unique to B.C.?

I would urge those involved in the decision to choose our white/black bear as a proud mascot for the world stage in the years culminating at Vancouver/Whistler in 2010.

* * *

[Translation]

FOLKLORIQUES DE TADOUSSAC

Mr. Christian Jobin (Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was extremely pleased, on behalf of the Minister of Public Works and Government Services and minister responsible for Communication Canada, to take part in the 4th annual Folkloriques de Tadoussac festival, which ran from October 9 to 13.

This five day music fest was attended by francophones from all across Canada. From Prince Edward Island to Ontario, francophone folklore is alive and well. For the first time this year, the beautiful city of Tadoussac and the Folkloriques were proud to welcome Louisiana.

The Folkloriques de Tadoussac festival attracted over 4,500 people this year, 1,000 more than last year, drawn by the city's splendid scenery and the warm hospitality of its inhabitants.

As a member of the House of Commons, I am proud to have been associated with the success of such an amazing event. Thanks to the Folkloriques de Tadoussac for such a great event.

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CATTLE PRODUCERS

Mr. Guy St-Julien (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the cattle producers in Abitibi-Témiscamingue will have lost over \$8 million in 2003, following the detection of a lone case of mad cow disease in western Canada.

On October 17, I met with farmers in Val-d'Or. Cattle farmers in our vast region are still experiencing a significant shortfall related to this Canadian crisis, because they have not yet been compensated for their cull cattle. The financial assistance announced by the

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governments of Quebec and Canada is not sufficient to cover all the losses suffered by these businesses.

We must respect the farmers of Abitibi-Témiscamingue and Canada, and heed their demands. We must take immediate action so they can obtain the financial assistance they need to survive.

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[English]

GOVERNOR GENERAL'S AWARDS

Mr. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Governor General's awards in commemoration of the Persons Case have been celebrated every October since 1979 in honour of a group of outstanding Canadians known as the Famous Five.

Emily Murphy, Louise McKinney, Nellie McClung, Henrietta Muir Edwards, and Irene Parlby fought to ensure women were recognized as "persons" and could therefore sit in the Senate. Their efforts led to the monumental Persons Case decision in 1929.

Each year, five women and one youth are recognized for embodying the dedication and determination of the Famous Five. The recipients are chosen based on their work to advance the cause of equality for women, for their leadership, and for their whole-hearted commitment to improving the quality of life for women in Canada.

It is with great pride that I rise to congratulate the six women who have been awarded the 2003 Governor General's awards in commemoration of the Persons Case. The recipients are Nicole Demers of Laval, Quebec; Eira "Babs" Friesen of Winnipeg, Manitoba; Joyce Sandra Hayden of Whitehorse, Yukon; Jayanti Negi of Edmonton, Alberta; Marilou McPhedran of Toronto, Ontario; and Jennifer Hustwitt of Waterloo, Ontario, is the recipient of the youth award.

These six women will be celebrated during Women's History Month along with the Famous Five and other outstanding women for the difference they have made.

* * *

BERTRAM BROCKHOUSE

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to rise and pay tribute to Dr. Bertram Brockhouse who recently passed away.

In 1994 Dr. Brockhouse shared the Nobel prize in physics for groundbreaking discoveries he made between 1950 and 1962 in the physics of solids using neutrons from Chalk River's NRX and NRU reactors.

Born in Alberta, and educated in British Columbia and Ontario, he is the only Canadian Nobel laureate of 14 Canadian recipients of the Nobel prize who was born, educated and completed his life's work in Canada.

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In the process of his discoveries he developed the triple axis spectrometer, which is still used today. He was the first to measure the energy versus momentum relationship for lattice waves in crystals, liquids and magnetic materials.

In fitting recognition of a lifetime of achievements, I would propose that we name the yet to be federally funded Canadian neutron facility in honour of this great Canadian.

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• (1405)

[Translation]

NICOLE DEMERS

Ms. Carole-Marie Allard (Laval East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my great pleasure to announce in this House the honour that was bestowed this morning upon a citizen of Laval, Nicole Demers. She and five other Canadians received the 2003 Governor General's Award in Commemoration of the Persons Case.

This award honours women who contribute greatly to the advancement of equality for girls and women and, in doing so, enrich their communities.

Everyone in Laval knows Nicole Demers. I would say that Nicole is a genuine person and that this award suits her to a tee. She is an outstanding listener and has devoted her entire life to enhancing the well-being of those around her.

She is the eldest of six children and wanted to become a missionary. This speaks volumes about the compassion of this woman, who currently runs the Fondation Vivre Chez Soi, which provides assistance to seniors and people with decreasing independence.

On behalf of myself and everyone in Laval, I want to congratulate Nicole and let her know how proud we are that she is one of us and proud of the honour which, thanks to her, reflects on Laval and all of Quebec.

* * *

NICOLE DEMERS

Ms. Madeleine Dalphond-Guiral (Laval Centre, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this morning, as part of the commemoration of the celebrated persons case, six women were honoured for their exceptional dedication to promoting equality for women.

Since 1979, a number of Quebec women have been honoured with this award: Françoise David, Vera Danyluk, Alice Girard, Thérèse Casgrain, to name but a few. Joining their ranks today is Nicole Demers, whom it is an honour and a pleasure to congratulate today.

Nicole Demers, a Quebecker through and through, holds the conviction that only commitment and determination will bring about change. Whether as a union activist or an administrator, she has worked for equity and justice for those women who are the most vulnerable.

A strong presence in the Laval community with a particular concern for the quality of life of seniors, she has focused her energies on the founding of Fondation Vivre Chez Soi, which helps seniors remain in their own homes. Her unflinching energy and courage are

admired by all those who have come in contact with her. I wish to commend, congratulate and thank Nicole on their behalf.

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[English]

DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF POVERTY

Ms. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last Friday was the United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Poverty.

Here in Ottawa, on the lawn of city hall, the Poverty Awareness Week Committee and the Dorothy Award Working Group held the dedication of the Dorothy O'Connell Monument for Anti-Poverty Activism.

This monument will be a tribute to Dorothy, a long time activist dedicated to eliminating poverty, and to the many others who have dedicated themselves to this objective, but it is also a reminder that poverty in our communities hurts us all, and that all of us may be one job, one divorce, one tragic accident, or one disability away from poverty. To combat poverty is a mission for all of us.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, this week the Prime Minister has chosen to visit communist China for a fourth time, but he cannot find even a few hours to touch down in Japan to press for an end to that country's unfair ban on Canadian beef exports even though Japan is the linchpin to opening the U.S. border to our \$6 billion in Canadian beef exports.

The Prime Minister will also maintain his flawless record of doing and saying nothing that might offend his Chinese communist pals, like speaking in favour of human rights and democracy or calling for negotiations with the Dalai Lama to save Tibet from Beijing's campaign of cultural genocide.

Could this betrayal of values and interests have anything to do with the Prime Minister's close ties with his friends and relatives in Power Corp., which has an enormous stake in the PRC? Could it be that the Prime Minister will enjoy large fees as a Power Corp. director and consultant after his retirement? And will anything change under new management, given that Power Corp. has been the biggest sponsor of the incoming prime minister's career?

It is time to end the influence of Liberal corporate cronyism on our foreign policy and to start putting Canadian values and interests first.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to add my opposition to that of many people in Canada and around the world to the anti-Semitic comments made by Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamed this past Thursday. I wish to add my voice to that of the Canadian government in condemning Mr. Mahathir's remarks in the strongest possible way.

The Canadian foreign affairs minister has responded by saying that “we make it clear to our own citizens that we totally reject both the premise and the spirit of where this is coming from”.

We in Canada are proud of moving our multicultural agenda from one of diversity and tolerance to one of genuine respect. The future of this tiny planet requires an acknowledgement that the opportunity of all peoples is not a zero-sum game. The rise of anti-Semitism and the incitement of hatred put the security of the world at risk.

As we celebrate the recipients of the Persons Day Award, we want to thank them for the leadership they have given us in always speaking out against a lack of equality, particularly Marilou McPhedran, a citizen of St. Paul's.

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• (1410)

BOVINE BEAUTY

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, PC): Mr. Speaker, even though the Government of Canada has been slow to respond to hurricane Juan, BMO Nesbitt Burns in Halifax acted quickly to develop a fundraiser to assist farmers devastated by this terrible storm.

Called “Project Bovine Beauty”, this fundraiser will accept donations at several levels and, in return, the cows themselves will provide an autographed photograph and a tax receipt. Some of the categories of contribution include maidens of the milking parlour, ladies in waiting, working girls at their best, and queen of the herd.

Co-sponsors of Project Bovine Beauty include the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture, the Rotary Club of Halifax Northwest, and Ron Ford, at the printer.

Contributions can be made at any BMO Nesbitt Burns office, or people can check out the BMO Nesbitt Burns website for details. All funds go to farmers and their families, who have lost so much.

I wish to say congratulations to BMO.

* * *

[*Translation*]

SOPHIE DUCHARME AND JENNY DEMERS

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today I am pleased to welcome to the Hill two students from a school in my riding, École Beaulieu. Sophie Ducharme and Jenny Demers are here along with Mrs. Desjardins, who is Sophie's mother.

These two are in a specialized entrepreneurship program, taking regular classes in the mornings and working on a project of special interest to them the rest of the time. Both want to be lawyers, so they have chosen to explore this through internships in the legal world.

These two, and the seven others in the program, are under the daily supervision of H el ene Du Perron. Their projects are very wide-ranging: nutrition, fashion, veterinary medicine, police work, and even literature.

I wish these two young ladies and their colleagues the best of luck in their studies and in their future careers.

[*English*]

S. O. 31

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I too want to add my comments to those made about the remarks of the prime minister of Malaysia and his perceptions of the worldwide Jewish community.

Comments in his speech were blatantly anti-Semitic, highly inflammatory and unequivocally false. To say they add nothing toward the peace process in the Middle East or the war on terrorism is self-evident.

His references to Jewish power and influence were hurtful and unhelpful. That his remarks were applauded by the Muslim leadership in attendance at the conference speaks to the ever-present fears of the Jewish people. His language was shocking and only furthers racist hatred, and his subsequent unwillingness to acknowledge his remarks as such is even more appalling.

Malaysia is on record as being a critic of the State of Israel. To extend this criticism to Jewish people because of faith and personal traits is totally unacceptable. My hope is that Muslim leaders in this country and throughout the world will speak out and deplore this bigotry and hatred for what it is. Preaching racism and hatred by anyone against anyone cannot go unchallenged.

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NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is rutting season and, all over Canada's great hinterland, dominant alpha males are running roughshod over their weaker, submissive rivals.

Here in Ottawa, the once proud Progressive Conservative Party has been so overwhelmed by a political animal with a bigger rack that it is ready to give up everything even remotely progressive about itself, even its name.

Between the Liberals selecting the most right wing leader in their party's history and the Tories now the willing supplicants of the regressive conservatives, where are Canadians to look for truly progressive leadership?

Thankfully, the NDP stands proud and unwavering as the vanguard of progressive thought in this country. Canadians can rest assured that the NDP stands in defence of Canadian progressive values and in defence of progressive programs and institutions that define Canada as a sovereign, progressive nation.

* * *

EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION

Ms. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this year St. Simon Catholic School in my riding of York West is celebrating 25 years of outstanding public education. I am delighted to have this opportunity to pay tribute to the school board, the teachers, the students, and the parents on this special anniversary.

Oral Questions

St. Simon Catholic School has been nurturing, motivating and encouraging students for 25 years. Its motto, "Rooted in the past... Branches to the Future", epitomizes the school philosophy that traditions and history are important links to future opportunities, achievement and success.

We all know that getting a good start in life through early learning and education is the key to a balanced, successful adult and a healthy society. Our education system is one of the best in the world and we in the House can all be proud of the excellent work that is being done in our schools across the country.

I ask members to please join me in congratulating St. Simon Catholic School on its 25th anniversary and in saying thanks to all our schools, which do a remarkable job of teaching our children to reach their potential.

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•(1415)

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, following the B.C. court decision in the case of John Robin Sharpe, "artistic merit" was replaced with "public good" instead of all defences for production and possession of child pornography being eliminated.

Police forces across the country have had enough problems when it comes to arresting and convicting child pornographers. Now, each piece of pornography has to be examined to make sure that it is not for the public good. This is complex, labour intensive and expensive. The Toronto police have confiscated pornographic material from over 800 people in the last year, but to date only 65 cases have been taken to court.

Canada needs a strategic national response to the growing problem of child exploitation and the Internet, better funding, specialized training for police, and computer technology that is up to date.

We are falling behind the rest of the world when it comes to fighting this horrific crime against children. This is a growing problem, spilling out into our rural areas, and it is not being addressed by this government, especially through Bill C-20. Let us join together and stamp out child pornography.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, we learned this past weekend that the Auditor General's report will be a scathing indictment of 10 years of mismanagement, incompetence and corruption by the Liberal government.

What we are also learning, once again, is that the Liberals, apparently, want to prorogue the House. They want to run out of town, get out of town just one step ahead of the sheriff.

Is the Liberal government committed to staying here as planned throughout the month of November so that it can be held accountable in the House for its actions?

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, we ought to congratulate and acknowledge the fact that the Leader of the Opposition seems to have engineered the takeover of a once great political party. We look forward to seeing how he goes about selling his views on Confederation and regional economic development in all those parts of the country where the PC Party have had faithful adherence over the years.

As to his question, I do not think there is any need for us to talk on a draft leaked report. As is the case with Auditor Generals' reports, we know that departments have the opportunity to respond, and they will do so before the report becomes final.

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, let me be clear. We are entering into a partnership for Canadians, something the Prime Minister and the next Liberal leader were incapable of doing.

The Auditor General will report that the government bent the rules in its own interest: Challenger jets for the Prime Minister instead of new helicopters and new equipment for military personnel; federal funds to Liberal friends through advertising contracts instead of federal funds to health care and the other needs of Canadians. The Prime Minister approved the deal. The former finance minister signed all the cheques.

Now is it true that the government will prorogue the House so that it will not be held accountable for its shameful record?

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not know what kind of partnership they put together but over the last 10 years, not only has the disunited right had 10 leaders, but the official opposition itself has had three different names. We will see what comes.

Before we start to get into the details of a possible Auditor General's report, I think we should give the departments, which may be mentioned in any report that is being prepared by the Auditor General, the normal right to respond before that report becomes a final document.

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, of course no leader over here is being driven out of town by his own party.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order, please. It would be helpful if hon. members would confine their remarks to the questions instead of a sort of general brouhaha. The hon. Leader of the Opposition has the floor and we will want to hear his question.

•(1420)

Mr. Stephen Harper: We seem to have struck some sensitive chords over there on the other side.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, there are already leaks concerning the Auditor General's report. The Prime Minister approved these agreements, and the new Liberal leader signed the contracts. The report will reveal the Liberal legacy: 10 years of mismanagement and corruption.

Will the government agree to change the rules to ensure that this report is tabled, even if this House is not sitting?

[English]

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, they ran the last two leaders they had out of town and now they are joining with another party. I guess they will run this leader out of town as well.

[Translation]

Clearly, there is no report. Perhaps there will be a report prepared by the Auditor General, but any department mentioned in reports should have an opportunity to respond. We cannot discuss something that is at the draft stage.

[English]

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): Mr. Speaker, an amazing thing happened—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order, please. I remind hon. members that we are wasting time. We are not going to get through the list of questions if there is this much noise greeting everyone who stands up to ask a question today.

I know there is a lot of enthusiasm in the House and there have been many political developments of interest to all hon. members but we need some order if we are going to have questions and responses.

The hon. member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough.

Mr. Peter MacKay: Mr. Speaker, an amazing thing happened on March 28, 2002. Against the advice of his own officials, the Prime Minister demanded two new luxury jets. The requisition order and the contract were signed and DND took delivery of the aircraft. All of this was done, incredibly, in one day at a cost of \$100 million.

The Auditor General now wants to tell Canadians the real story behind that unprecedented purchase and other examples of government waste and mismanagement.

Will the Prime Minister amend the Auditor General Act to allow her to present her report, even if the House of Commons shuts down early, as is planned?

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we all know what the signature of the hon. member is worth on a document, ostensibly one that is serious.

There is nothing new in these allegations. We have debated this in the House before. We think that Canadian ministers should fly in planes that are made by Canadian workers and that we need to showcase them to the world. Let us wait and see what the Auditor General's report really does have to say.

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): Mr. Speaker, I can tell by the look in the Deputy Prime Minister's eyes that he and his Liberal colleagues are united in fright.

Oral Questions

It took eight hours to buy two planes for the Prime Minister: eight hours, 10 years and no decision on Sea King helicopters. What a shocking, self-serving, disgraceful abuse of public office.

Will the Prime Minister amend the Auditor General Act to allow her to present her report if Parliament shuts early, or is the Prime Minister so obsessed with saddling his replacement with this scandal that he will hold back on the truth?

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I recognize that rhetoric. It is what the Reform Party used to say about the PC Party only a few weeks ago. Let us just see how convenient this marriage turns out to be.

We have an Auditor General with the right to file a report. She prepares a draft report and submits it to departments so they can make their comments and respond to it before her report becomes final. Let us see what her final report has to say.

[Translation]

The Speaker: Order please. It is very difficult to hear the questions and answers. The Chair cannot hear them, and remarks could be made which are out of order.

The hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie.

* * *

• (1425)

FOUNDATIONS

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last May, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts recommended that all the foundations established by the government be subject to the Auditor General's scrutiny and the Access to Information Act. However, the President of the Treasury Board has just rejected this recommendation.

With the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, the right hand man of the future prime minister, wanting to abolish the sponsorship program to save face, will the minister admit that her refusal is giving the government the means to continue allocating public funds to independent foundations which are not controlled by Parliament?

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, foundations are directly accountable to Parliament through the ministers, in the usual manner, by means of reports which are tabled in Parliament by each of the departments.

With regard to the funding agreements reached with each foundation, it is possible to require evaluation and compliance reports. The annual reports of foundations established by statute are tabled directly in the House. Parliamentarians, therefore, have all the necessary tools at their disposal.

Oral Questions

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in other words, the minister is saying that the committee was wrong. However, the committee looked at the facts, including the Auditor General's report, which shows that crown corporations were used to launder public funds during the sponsorship scandal. However, these crown corporations are not often subject to the Auditor General's scrutiny or the Access to Information Act, as is also the case with numerous foundations.

It is all very well for the future prime minister to say he wants to abolish the sponsorship program, but is the minister not ensuring that in future it will be the foundations which will benefit the friends of the party with no control by parliament, as was usually the case—

The Speaker: The hon. President of the Treasury Board.

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will not comment on leaks relating to an incomplete report that has yet to be tabled in the House.

That said, some foundations were established by statute. Therefore, Parliament approved the establishment of the majority, over 80% of all amounts allocated to the foundations. Each board is responsible for appointing an auditor, and each audit is submitted to the minister who must report directly to Parliament. Therefore, parliamentarians have an opportunity to ask questions relating to the different foundations.

Mr. Robert Lanctôt (Châteauguay, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the list of heads of crown corporations shows us that these people are all well-known Liberals, involved at the highest levels: André Ouellet at Canada Post, Jean Pelletier at Via Rail and Michel Vennat at the Business Development Bank of Canada.

In the same vein, will the government admit that the foundations created by the former finance minister, which are also controlled by Liberals, will become new vehicles for the government to get itself into another scandal like that involving sponsorships?

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, with respect to most of the foundations—the largest ones, such as the Canada Foundation for Innovation, were even created by legislation—the benefits and assistance provided to researchers across the country are visible. I think most hon. members realize clearly the positive impact they can have.

That said, at any time we can ask the representatives, the heads of the foundations, as well as the responsible minister, to appear before parliamentary committees and to answer questions concerning their foundation.

Mr. Robert Lanctôt (Châteauguay, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is odd to hear about this kind of audit. There is some \$6.5 billion not yet spent by these foundations.

By sheltering the foundations from the provisions of the Access to Information Act, the government is arming itself with the tools to create another scandal, like the sponsorship scandal, more modern tools created by the person who will soon become prime minister.

Are we to understand that what awaits us is a new prime minister, with new tools, but with the same results at the end of the day?

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I believe that Canadians can see the results every

day, whether from the Canada Foundation for Innovation or the millennium scholarships, which help hundreds and hundreds of Canadian students, or Genome Canada, which supports research in the field of genomics. All of these grants for research are important for the whole country and most Canadians will benefit from them.

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● (1430)

[English]

AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT

Mr. Grant Hill (MacLeod, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General is an independent watchdog of government spending. Here is what she found out about the \$100 million purchase of luxury jets for the cabinet. First off, the jets were not needed; second, the money was spent suspiciously right at year end; and finally, there was no tendering of the contract.

Why did the former finance minister sign the cheques for this deal when it was so flawed and the priority so low?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am not quite sure where the hon. member got those quotes because it is my understanding the report of the Auditor General has yet to be released. It would be very difficult for me to comment on a report that I have not read because it has not been released.

Mr. Grant Hill (MacLeod, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it has been leaked so that every journalist in the country knows what is in it.

The executive jets for Liberal cabinet ministers are new and flying 99% of the time. Sea Kings are old and spend much too much time on the ground for repairs. My question stands. Why are the priorities of the next Liberal leader so mixed up that he would sign off on this flawed process when the priority was so low?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since the hon. member mentioned Sea Kings, I might mention that my colleague, the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, and I have been working diligently to assure the fastest possible delivery of the new helicopter.

Indeed, just as that great economist Adam Smith once said, "It is not from the benevolence of the butcher...or the baker, that we expect our dinner", so too is it not to the benevolence of the helicopter companies that we will seek speedy delivery? That is why my colleague and I are in the process of designing penalties for slow delivery and bonuses for fast delivery, which go to the bottom line—

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

Oral Questions

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the respective memberships of the Canadian Alliance and the Progressive Conservative Party will be interested to know that far from waiting to see what they thought of the matter, the union has been consummated on the floor of the House of Commons here in question period before they even get to say anything.

In the end, what is the difference between a marriage of convenience and a flag of convenience? Why does the right not go the whole way, sign up with the member for LaSalle—Émard and get it over with. We will have one big united right in this country with only the NDP standing up for what counts?

I want to ask the minister—

The Speaker: The hon. member has run out of time. We are in question period, not S. O. 31s. The hon. member for Winnipeg—Transcona may have a supplementary question.

Mr. Bill Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the government House leader, does he not think the people of Canada are entitled to hear what the Auditor General has to say in a timely way when she is supposed to report? Will he guarantee that the House will live up to the calendar that it is bound by? Will he tell us that the House will be sitting and if it is not sitting, will he at least be honest and tell us we are not sitting so we can do something about it?

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is getting a little agitated. He should know that the Auditor General can report four times a year. We are into that quarter. There is no one that stops the Auditor General from reporting and from tabling her report before the House of Commons.

Insofar as the parliamentary calendar is concerned, that is published on a weekly basis. His seatmate attends regularly and does an excellent job at the House leaders meeting. He should have a little bit more confidence in her than that.

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ETHICS

Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore, PC): Mr. Speaker, the government pays little attention to ethics. It seems clear that the ethics counsellor makes up rules on the fly and whether a member chooses to obey those rules or not is optional. The ethics counsellor instructed the Minister of Industry to remove himself from dealings with the Irving family and the Minister of Industry blatantly refused.

Will the Deputy Prime Minister explain to the House why his ethics standards are optional?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I sought the advice of the ethics counsellor. I followed his advice absolutely. I am satisfied that in every respect I complied with the direction of the ethics counsellor by not involving myself in any decisions that directly affected the interests of the Irving companies.

Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore, PC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Industry accepted gifts from the Irving family well over the \$200 limit. Not only did the member accept the gift, he delayed in reporting the gift and he ignored instructions from the ethics counsellor to remove himself from decisions affecting the Irving empire.

The Minister of Public Works did exactly the same thing and was forced to resign. Maybe the Minister of Industry could explain the double standard. I would like to hear his explanation.

• (1435)

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I made full disclosure to the ethics counsellor with respect to the matter in question. The ethics counsellor provided me with advice. I took that advice and followed it to the letter. I excluded myself from decisions that directly involved the interests of the Irving companies. That was the advice and I followed it.

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[Translation]

ST. LAWRENCE SEAWAY

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—Petite-Patrie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last June, the federal government refused to even do a study of dredging and widening the St. Lawrence Seaway in order to allow large vessels to move from the Great Lakes to the Atlantic Ocean. Now, only a few months later, we learn the government is in favour of the project.

What happened in the last four months to prompt this total about-face by the federal government as far as the seaway is concerned?

Hon. David Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the U.S. government has decided to examine the possibility of expanding the St. Lawrence Seaway. We find this of interest, but we require studies before undertaking expansion.

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—Petite-Patrie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, since his colleague, the Minister of Transport, has given support in principle to the project, can the Minister of Environment tell us whether he has given his OK to the St. Lawrence Seaway dredging and widening project, knowing what a negative environmental impact it will have on the St. Lawrence? What new information does he have at his disposal?

Hon. David Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is why we are examining the situation. We need to determine whether there will be any environmental problems.

* * *

[English]

ETHICS

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton Southwest, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the industry minister has been caught in a clear conflict of interest. In July 2001 he went on a fishing trip in an executive jet paid for by the Irving family. In June 2003 the federal government awarded an Irving owned company \$55 million to help redevelop their unused shipyard, something the minister had been lobbying for since May 2002. This is a clear conflict of interest.

Will the minister do the honourable thing today and resign as the industry minister?

Oral Questions

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, after I became Minister of Industry, because of the nature of the files I was involved in, I went to see the ethics counsellor. I made full disclosure of the visit to the Irving family. I took his advice to withdraw from, in particular the matter referred to by the member. I did withdraw from it. It was handled entirely by the members of government. It was decided by the members of government. It was eventually included in the budget this year without my knowledge in advance. I have complied with the advice of the ethics counsellor to remove myself from that and other matters that directly relate to the Irving businesses.

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton Southwest, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the industry minister was specifically directed by the ethics counsellor not to involve himself in any decisions involved with the Irvings.

The \$55 million fund was announced during that blackout period. In addition, in November 2002 the vice-chairman of Irving Shipbuilding was appointed by Industry Canada to the shipbuilding and industrial marine advisory committee. This was also done during the blackout period put forward by the ethics counsellor.

Clearly the minister is in a conflict of interest and was involved during the blackout period. Again I ask the minister, will he do the honourable thing and resign today?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member is not listening to the response. After I got the advice of the ethics counsellor, I withdrew from the matter. It may have been decided during the blackout period, but not with my involvement. I was out of the matter. It was decided by others.

With respect to the advisory council, 30 volunteers from around the country donate their time and their expenses to come to meetings twice a year to talk about policy for shipbuilding in Canada. A representative of the Irving companies was included in that 30 and he took part.

That is hardly a conflict of interest involving the pecuniary advantage of the Irving company.

* * *

[Translation]

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Sébastien Gagnon (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay, BQ): Mr. Speaker, with respect to the cull cattle issue, the Quebec minister of agriculture says that the federal government must make an effort and she is asking for help in convincing the federal government to do its share.

Given that 40% of dairy cows are in Quebec, several farms are literally going bankrupt and the Government of Quebec is asking the federal government to do its share, does the Minister of Agriculture intend to follow up on the requests made by the minister and the farmers?

• (1440)

[English]

Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been having meetings for a number of weeks of now, including discussions with provincial ministers, the

Canadian Cattlemen's Association and the Dairy Farmers of Canada. We have been discussing with them the concerns we all have with the culled cow situation in Canada and the development of markets and ways in which we can work with the provinces and the industry to alleviate the financial pressure that has been caused by BSE.

I can tell the hon. member we will continue those discussions with the provinces and the industry.

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Gagnon (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the new agricultural policy framework includes less money for cattle producers than the special program did last summer.

How can the federal government wash its hands of its responsibilities to farmers who are going bankrupt, when it collects 50% of our taxes? If it collects our taxes, it has to assume the responsibilities that come with it.

[English]

Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Federation of Agriculture asked for a third party study of the new business risk management program.

The first vice-president of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture is also the president of the UPA. We responded to that and the report that came back in June of this year said very clearly that the new business risk management proposal and program for Canadian producers is better than the programs that were there in the past.

I do not know why the hon. member is complaining when we are making improvements to support the farmers rather than making other changes.

* * *

ETHICS

Mr. Leon Benoit (Lakeland, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the industry minister broke the law by accepting from Irving Shipbuilding a gift which was well over the \$200 limit. The minister then pressured the cabinet to give that same company millions of dollars in taxpayers' money.

When the current House leader got caught doing the same thing, he lost his job. Will the current minister, now that he has been caught, hold himself to that same standard and resign?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have made clear that I made full disclosure to the ethics counsellor and by that time had not involved myself in the decision affecting the Irving companies. The ethics counsellor advised me to get out of matters involving them, which I did. I followed that advice and respected it.

After that point I did not lobby, I did not argue and I did not work on those files. In relation to all those matters, I took the ethics counsellor's advice that I should be no part of decisions affecting their interest and that is exactly what I did.

Oral Questions

Mr. Leon Benoit (Lakeland, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the minister cannot hide behind the ethics counsellor.

Here are the facts: ACOA, which was responsible to the industry minister, paid \$55 million to Irving Shipbuilding. The Irvings gave the minister a trip worth well over the \$200 limit. In the eyes of the public, the gift bought the Irvings \$55 million in taxpayers' money.

This is clearly a serious situation and what the minister did was wrong. Will he do the right thing and resign?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, long before any decision was made with respect to the Irving application, I withdrew. On the advice of the ethics counsellor, I withdrew.

That file was then handled by others. It was analyzed by others. It was decided by others and was announced by others without my involvement.

There was no connection between the two. I sought the advice and took the advice of the ethics counsellor. As a result there was no connection between the trip and the decision because I was not involved.

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AUDITOR GENERAL OF CANADA

Mr. John Herron (Fundy—Royal, PC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister can run but he cannot hide. Sooner or later the Auditor General's report will come out. To that end, he promised Canadians an open government.

Will the government bring in an amendment to the Auditor General Act to allow her to present her report even if the Prime Minister sets down this House early? I can assure the Deputy Prime Minister that members on this side of the House are willing to pass that amendment faster than the Prime Minister can buy himself new jets.

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General reports to this House every three months. She can report to this House on any day. She could report to this House tomorrow or any other day. The Auditor General is perfectly entitled to do that. The hon. member knows this quite well. This fabrication of a story does not make reality.

Mr. John Herron (Fundy—Royal, PC): Mr. Speaker, there is only one reason that the Prime Minister will not bring an amendment forward. He does not want to be held accountable.

The Prime Minister could give himself a pay raise and buy new jets in record time. Why can we not see an amendment to enable the Auditor General to table her report early?

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I hate to inform the hon. member about the rules and about the act but the Auditor General could bring that report tomorrow if that was what the Auditor General wished and if her report was ready. In fact there is no legal requirement to change anything to permit the Auditor General to report so-called early. She is entitled to do that already. Most of us already know this.

• (1445)

ETHICS

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Industry will know, his department is currently dealing with the Irving corporation on closing the Saint John shipyard with a secret \$55 million deal contingent on the workers giving up their union.

Yes, this is the same Irving corporation that thinks it owns New Brunswick and treated the minister to a free vacation that he forgot to tell everyone about.

Will the Minister demonstrate that he is capable of standing up to the Irvings and make public his secret deal today?

[Translation]

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is no secret deal. The case was handled by other members of the government.

I sought, received and followed advice from the ethics counsellor. I was not involved in reaching the decision in this case, but I am convinced there is no secret deal. I will leave it up to the others to answer questions on the deal. I personally was not involved in it.

* * *

[English]

CANADA HEALTH AND SOCIAL TRANSFER

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the former finance minister's elimination of the Canada assistance plan has paved the way for the B.C. government to be the first province to impose time limits on social assistance. The 24-month rule will force tens of thousands into destitution and is being challenged today in B.C.

There is a clear federal responsibility here through transfer payments and under the Constitution to provide essential services to all Canadians.

Will the finance minister make it clear to the B.C. government that these changes are unlawful and unjust and must be stopped now?

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I believe that the matter which the hon. member has raised is something that lies within the exclusive jurisdiction of the province.

I think that, as we have seen over the last number of years, support to the provinces under the CHST for health care as well as for those other areas of provincial spending that are covered by the CHST have increased. I expect that federal funding will continue to increase to the provinces for those purposes.

*Oral Questions***DISASTER ASSISTANCE**

Mr. John Reynolds (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, my riding in British Columbia has suffered loss of life and millions in damage due to flooding. Liberal neglect, indifference and refusal to allow dredging of rivers, streams and creeks that are now in flood gets much of the blame.

The mayor of Pemberton just told me they need help now to open the Hurley Road. They need help now to build Bailey bridges. They need help now to carry people to safety and food to those who are in need.

Is the military on standby orders for emergency disaster relief efforts in British Columbia?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the military has shown that it is always on standby for disasters that may happen anywhere across the country.

We had up to 1,000 military personnel helping after the hurricane in Nova Scotia. We had up to 2,000 military in British Columbia helping to fight forest fires.

If the need should arise in the current situation in British Columbia, I have no doubt that the chief of defence staff will once more accede to the request from the provincial government.

Mr. John Reynolds (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the people of British Columbia are in need of help. People have already died in British Columbia because of this disaster.

The people in that area, the mayor and others, are busy saving lives. It is now raining again in British Columbia, with a possible crisis, due a lot as I have said because of an environment minister who will not let rivers or creeks be dredged. This could have been avoided.

I want to know from the minister, is the government ready to be there now to help the people when they need the help?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree with the hon. member that this is a very serious situation.

I was in Kelowna the night the houses were burning. I saw with my own eyes the extreme gravity that natural disasters can bring to the people of British Columbia and Canada.

I was there when our soldiers were there. We are working to advance payments. Should the need arise in this current state, I can assure the member that, as in past crises, the government will be there to help when it is needed.

* * *

● (1450)

[Translation]

THE BUDGET

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance is holding prebudget consultations in preparation for the next government budget. In the circles of the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard, it is said openly that there will be major cuts in all government departments' budgets.

My question to the Minister of Finance is the following: Are his current prebudget consultations not mere window dressing, since the real decisions are being made outside, beyond Parliament's reach?

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once the government has a budget ready, it will be presented here, in Parliament, and be adopted or not by Parliament. It is a bit too early to tell what exactly will be included in the next budget. I think now is the time to consult the public across Canada, to gather information and input. That is what I am doing, and so is the finance committee of this place.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this goes to show how preposterous this whole situation is, with one person drafting, and receiving recommendations, and another making decisions and providing direction.

What people want to know is whether the budgets for employment insurance, old age pensions, health, education and the Kyoto protocol will be affected by this government's next budget. That is what people want to know.

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think it is worth waiting for the next budget. In February, we brought down a budget, which was adopted in this House. This is a process that started on February 19. The preparations for the next budget are ongoing, and it will be brought down when it is brought down.

* * *

[English]

MEMBER FOR LASALLE—ÉMARD

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is not only the industry minister who is having ethical problems these days.

Last Friday the ethics counsellor failed to deliver his report on the new Liberal leader's omission of Lansdowne Technologies from his declaration of assets. It sounds like the ethics counsellor is having a little trouble putting lipstick on that pig. Lansdowne received at least \$12 million in government contracts.

My question is, why does the government not admit that the new Liberal leader signed a false declaration of assets and put himself potentially in a \$12 million conflict of interest?

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been through this in the House before. In fact, it does appear that there was an administrative error in connection with a report.

However, it is clear that Lansdowne Technologies was wholly owned by a company that was included in the declaration. It was therefore covered by the declaration.

In fact, it is tiresome to hear the member for Medicine Hat get up day after day and simply throw mud at someone who has more than complied with all the rules since 1988.

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, apparently the ethics counsellor does not see it that way or he would not be investigating.

The new Liberal leader clearly owned this company. He repeatedly failed to include this company in his declaration of assets.

My question is, when will the government admit that the new Liberal leader personally profited when Lansdowne picked up \$12 million in federal contracts? Does he not see that as a problem?

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I see in today's *Hill Times* that the hon. member describes himself "giddy as a schoolgirl". I do not know what that says about his question, but I think he should restrain his giddiness and tendency to throw mud at hon. members.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, on November 1 many families residing in private married quarters provided by the Canadian Forces housing authority will be slapped with yet another rent increase.

Rents will increase by as much as 25% on some bases. Civilians are protected from drastic rent increases by provincial law; however, these laws do not apply to federal property.

Why is the defence minister gouging Canadian Forces families with unreasonable rent increases?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that quality of life is a primary objective of the Department of National Defence.

On the question of housing, since 1996 the government has invested \$300 million in improvements to the quality of housing for our military people. At the same time, less than 25% of our military personnel live in government provided houses.

It is necessary to provide fairness across the board so there has to be equity in rents paid to the private sector and the government. There are strict limits on the rent increase that is allowable in any given year.

• (1455)

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, we will leave it to our armed forces personnel to decide whether the minister's definition of fairness is adequate and proper.

Tenant protection acts guard against drastic and unfair rent increases; however, provincial laws do not protect military families from massive rent increases at the hands of the minister and the Liberal government. To add insult to injury, the living standards of many of these housing units are quite simply deplorable and do not even meet provincial housing standards.

Why does the Minister of National Defence think that he can get away with things that even slum lords would be held accountable for?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the last five years, the top priority of the Department of National Defence has been to improve the quality of life.

I have mentioned \$300 million in housing, substantial salary increases, substantial improvements in the health care system and the

Oral Questions

treatment of PTSD, and substantial improvements in family resource centres.

We are extremely mindful of the contribution that our members make. This has become all too clear over the last couple of weeks. The well-being, welfare and good quality of life of members of the Canadian Forces remains a top priority for the government.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADIAN GRAND PRIX

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonnette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, while Normand Legault, the promoter of the Grand Prix, is working to save the event, the government is negotiating with Molson behind the scenes and may derail the whole process.

Instead of all these parallel approaches, would it not be better for the government to send a clear message to the private sector by making a public commitment to a financial contribution that would save the Grand Prix in the end?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, discussions involving the Government of Canada, the Government of Quebec and the City of Montreal are ongoing, in an attempt to find a solution. We hope to find a solution so that Formula 1 racing in Canada can continue.

* * *

[English]

ETHICS

Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I want to follow-up the questions put to the industry minister.

He claimed to have been un-involved in cabinet decisions related to the Irving shipyards during the blackout period. I note that on July 19, 2002, in the New Brunswick *Telegraph Journal* and on January 22, 2003, in the *The Evening News* he gave indications to the public both times that he was intimately briefed and knowledgeable on the procurement process and the decisions being taken in cabinet.

I would like to ask the minister, was he involved in these decisions or was he simply deceiving the public as to his knowledge?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, from and after the time when I spoke to the ethics counsellor I was out of the decision process. If I was asked publicly, I said only that the government would make a decision when the government had something to announce. I took no part in the decision-making process.

The Prime Minister's Office, the PCO, and other members of my own department, including the deputy minister, were involved. I was not.

The decision was made without my involvement from and after the time the ethics counsellor gave me advice. It was then included in the budget in February of this year, which was news to me, and it was followed through with the usual procedures.

Government Orders

[Translation]

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. Richard Marceau (Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Ahmad Cheriam, an individual wanted by the Quebec police in connection with a juvenile prostitution ring, crossed the Canadian border without any problem, in spite of two arrest warrants and a national all points bulletin.

How can the government explain that, despite the investments in security that were made, our borders are still sieves?

[English]

Hon. Elinor Caplan (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to inform all members that there was no lookout in our system at the time that this individual entered Canada.

I can tell the member that since July 2000 customs officers have apprehended and arrested 2,136 individuals, criminals who were in our system. If they are in our system, we stop them and arrest them.

* * *

• (1500)

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the cattle industry and Canadians have been kept in the dark by the government on the issue of BSE and the resulting border closure.

It was confirmed today by the U.S., while we were told a week ago by the U.S. consulate, that in the next few days the U.S. government will publish the rule change that will allow the importation of live cattle under 30 months of age.

Why do the Canadian cattle industry and Canadians continually have to get this critical information from the United States instead of its own government?

Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have frequent conversations with my counterpart in the United States and I can tell members that I had one of those within the last hour and a half.

The secretary in the United States is not able to inform anyone as to when the regulations will be published. The Americans have a process that is very similar to what we have. Regulations are published and then there is a comment period. No announcement has been made as to when the regulations will be published and that has been confirmed to me today.

We anticipate it will be in the not too distant future. No date has been set and that date has not been given to anyone at this time.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—St. Clair, NDP): Mr. Speaker, climate change and global warming have contributed both in number and severity to many environmental disasters.

We ratified the Kyoto protocol because of that reality. Now the environment commissioner tells us that we will only meet 50% of our targeted quota for reducing greenhouse gases. We also hear that

the future Prime Minister intends, as he did as finance minister, to slash department budgets.

Will the government commit today that funding for Kyoto will be secured and safe from the knife of the next Prime Minister?

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform the hon. member that we have in place a plan for implementation of our Kyoto target. We fully expect to achieve that and obviously, as has been said on a number of occasions, there will be need for further budgetary measures.

There will be a need perhaps for tax measures. There will indeed be the need for the provinces and ordinary citizens to act as well. We have in fact a plan which we will put into effect to achieve our target.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of the recipients of the Governor General's Awards in commemoration of the Persons Case: Nicole Demers of Laval, Quebec; Eira Friesen of Winnipeg, Manitoba; Joyce Hayden of Whitehorse, Yukon; Marilou McPhedran of Toronto, Ontario; Jayanti Negi of Edmonton, Alberta; and Jennifer Hustwitt of Waterloo, Ontario.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES READJUSTMENT ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion

The Speaker: It being 3:04 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at report stage and second reading of Bill C-49.

Call in the members.

• (1505)

[Translation]

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

*(Division No. 245)***YEAS**

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Allard	Anders
Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)	Anderson (Victoria)
Assad	Assadourian
Augustine	Bagnell
Bailey	Barnes (London West)
Barrette	Bélair
Bélangier	Bellemare
Bennett	Benoit
Bertrand	Bevilacqua
Binet	Blondin-Andrew
Bonin	Bonwick
Boudria	Bradshaw
Breitkreuz	Brown
Bryden	Burton
Byrne	Caccia

Routine Proceedings

Cadman
 Caplan
 Castonguay
 Coderre
 Comuzzi
 DeVillers
 Dion
 Duncan
 Elley
 Farrah
 Gallant
 Goodale
 Grey
 Hill (Macleod)
 Hinton
 Jaffer
 Jobin
 Jordan
 Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
 Knutson
 Lastewka
 Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
 Macklin
 Marcil
 McCallum
 McLellan
 Meredith
 Mills (Red Deer)
 Murphy
 Nault
 O'Reilly
 Pagtakhan
 Penson
 Pratt
 Proulx
 Redman
 Reid (Lanark—Carleton)
 Ritz
 Rock
 Savoy
 Schmidt
 Shepherd
 Skelton
 Sorenson
 St-Julien
 Stewart
 Strahl
 Thibeault (Saint-Lambert)
 Toews
 Torsney
 Vellacott
 Whelan
 White (Langley—Abbotsford)
 Yelich — 139

Calder
 Casson
 Catterall
 Collenette
 Cummins
 Dhaliwal
 Dromisky
 Easter
 Epp
 Forseth
 Godfrey
 Graham
 Hanger
 Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
 Hubbard
 Jennings
 Johnston
 Karetak-Lindell
 Kilger (Stormont—Dundas—Charlottenburgh)
 Kraft Sloan
 Longfield
 Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni)
 Manley
 Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
 McKay (Scarborough East)
 McNally
 Merrifield
 Moore
 Myers
 Neville
 Owen
 Pallister
 Pillitteri
 Price
 Rajotte
 Regan
 Reynolds
 Robillard
 Saada
 Scherrer
 Sgro
 Simard
 Solberg
 Spencer
 St. Denis
 Stinson
 Szabo
 Thompson (Wild Rose)
 Tonks
 Vanclief
 Wappel
 White (North Vancouver)
 Wilfert

Bergeron
 Cauchon
 Drouin
 Folco
 Gagnon (Champlain)
 Girard-Bujold
 Guay
 Harvard
 Laframboise
 Loubier
 Marleau
 Patry
 Rocheleau
 Carroll
 Cotler
 Eggleton
 Fontana
 Gaudet
 Guarnieri
 Guimond
 Keyes
 Lalonde
 Mahoney
 Paquette
 Picard (Drummond)
 St-Hilaire — 28

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

[*English*]

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

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1510)

[*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 10 petitions.

* * *

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. David Price (Compton—Stanstead, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association, which represented Canada at the annual tour of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly held in Italy from July 28 to August 2.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS, NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Raymond Bonin (Nickel Belt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, Northern Development and Natural Resources regarding its order of reference of Tuesday, September 23, concerning the supplementary estimates A. Your committee has considered the supplementary estimates A and has agreed to report without amendment.

* * *

WHISTLE BLOWERS PROTECTION ACT

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-457, an act respecting the protection of whistle blowers and to amend the Auditor General Act, the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act and the Public Service Staff Relations Act.

NAYS

Members

Bachand (Saint-Jean)
 Blaikie
 Bourgeois
 Cardin
 Clark
 Crête
 Davies
 Doyle
 Fournier
 Gagnon (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay)
 Godin
 Herron
 Lanctôt
 Marceau
 Masse
 Ménard
 Proctor
 Sauvageau
 Tremblay

Bigras
 Borotsik
 Brison
 Casey
 Comartin
 Dalphond-Guiral
 Desrochers
 Duceppe
 Gagnon (Québec)
 Gauthier
 Hearn
 Keddy (South Shore)
 MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough)
 Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
 McDonough
 Perron
 Roy
 Stoffer
 Wasylcyia-Leis — 38

PAIRED

Members

Alcock

Asselin

Routine Proceedings

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to introduce this bill today, which would have the effect of introducing a legal framework for true whistleblower protection in the country. More and more people feel strongly that this is long overdue, especially in light of the recent horrific example of the Radwanski scandal.

The reason this bill calls for amending the Public Service Staff Relations Act and the Auditor General Act is that we believe the Auditor General's office should be the proper place to which whistleblowers may come. We know that they need to come to some place where they feel safe and free of reprisals, and we believe the office of the Auditor General is the right institution to be this new whistleblower office.

I am happy to introduce this legislation today.

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

* * *

• (1515)

CANADA ELECTIONS ACT

Ms. Judy Wasylcia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-458, an act to amend the Canada Elections Act.

She said: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure today to introduce this bill to amend the Canada Elections Act to fully include the dependants of Canadian Forces personnel within the special voting provisions designed to take into consideration their relocation away from home communities in the service of their country.

Currently under the act, members of the armed forces, including reserves, are permitted to have their votes counted in their normal home electoral constituencies simply by filling out a special residency form. However their spouses and other dependents who accompany them on their postings have no such choice and must vote in the ridings in which their partners have been posted.

The purpose of this bill is to remedy this unfairness by extending to Canadian Forces dependants the same rights as their spouses or parents to choose their home constituencies for voting purposes.

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

* * *

PETITIONS**HEALTH**

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure of tabling two petitions today. One is from the regions of Calgary, Edmonton, St. Paul, Beiseker and Whitecourt.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to provide Canadians with greater access to natural health products and to restore freedom of choice in personal health care by enacting Bill C-420, an act to amend the Food and Drugs Act.

MARRIAGE

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I also have the pleasure of presenting a petition from my riding of Wild Rose and the towns of Olds and Didsbury.

The petitioners call on Parliament to pass legislation to recognize the institution of marriage in federal law as being a lifelong union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.

Mr. Darrel Stinson (Okanagan—Shuswap, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present to the House seven petitions totalling 1,846 signatures.

The petitioners are requesting that the Government of Canada hold a binding national referendum in the next general election to ask the following question. Must the Government of Canada continue to define marriage as a union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others, yes or no?

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Mr. Joe Comuzzi (Thunder Bay—Superior North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour today to present petitions from the people of Thunder Bay—Superior North with respect to hate literature under section 318 and section 319 of the Criminal Code.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to protect the rights of Canadians to be free to share their religious beliefs without fear of prosecution.

I might add that the issue was referred to the justice committee and to the Minister of Justice, and I am advised by both that those precautions have been entered into the legislation.

MARRIAGE

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition signed by a number of Canadians, including from my own riding of Mississauga South. The petition concerns the issue of marriage.

The petitioners point out that on June 10 the Ontario Court of Appeal ruled that same sex couples must have the legal right to marry on the basis of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The petitioners also point out that the government can only do this in areas of law within its jurisdiction and that only the federal government can pass legislation to provide who can marry.

Therefore, the petitioners call upon Parliament to invoke the notwithstanding clause to pass a law so that only two persons of the opposite sex can be married.

Ms. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 I would like to present five petitions on behalf of constituents from my riding of York West and from the greater Toronto area.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to take all necessary means to maintain and support the definition of marriage in Canada as a union between one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.

Routine Proceedings

•(1520)

Mr. Sarkis Assadourian (Brampton Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present three petitions from Brampton Centre. The first petition calls upon the House to recognize marriage as the union of a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others.

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Mr. Sarkis Assadourian (Brampton Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my second petition asks the House to recognize and protect all children from suffering under pedophilia and that all activities involving pedophilia be outlawed.

STEM CELL RESEARCH

Mr. Sarkis Assadourian (Brampton Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the third petition asks that Parliament encourage adult stem cell research to prevent sickness and diseases suffered by many Canadians throughout the country.

LABELLING OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table a petition signed by hundreds of people across Canada who are very concerned about fetal alcohol syndrome.

The petitioners note that the consumption of alcoholic beverages while pregnant has been shown to cause adverse alcohol related conditions such as FAS. They note that awareness of the hazards of consuming alcohol while pregnant has shown to reduce alcohol consumption during pregnancy. They note that Parliament overwhelmingly passed a motion in support of such a measure on April 23, 2001.

They call upon the House to take measures that would prohibit the sale of alcoholic beverages in Canada unless that container carries the warning, "Drinking alcohol during pregnancy can cause birth defects".

CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions.

The first petition, which is in two parts, was signed by about 170 people from my riding of Nanaimo, Nanoose, Lantzville, Parksville and Qualicum Beach who are concerned with animal cruelty.

People are concerned about the frequent incidents of cruelty to animals and declare that these incidents undermine Canadian values of compassion. They are calling upon Parliament to take action to introduce and enforce stronger legislation prohibiting cruelty to animals that would protect those that cannot protect themselves.

HEALTH

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the second petition, which is again in two parts, contains about 350 signatures, largely from my riding and the communities I just mentioned, but also some from Alberta and Ontario, including Fonthill, Welland, Burlington, Port Colborne and other communities, and it concerns Bill C-420.

They are calling for changes in enhancing freedom of choice in health care. They want Parliament to recognize that herbs, dietary supplements and other traditional natural products should be

classified as food, not drugs, and that scientific evidence now confirms that many diseases and disorders listed in schedule A can in fact be mitigated through the judicious use of natural health products. They are calling for the changes recommended by Bill C-420 that was debated this morning.

Mr. Norman Doyle (St. John's East, PC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition on behalf of a number of people from all across Newfoundland and Labrador. The petitioners are calling upon Parliament to provide Canadians with greater access to natural health products and to restore freedom of choice in personal health care by enacting Bill C-420, an act to amend the Food and Drugs Act.

[*Translation*]

MARRIAGE

Mr. Bob Kilger (Stormont—Dundas—Charlottenburgh, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I have the honour to present two petitions signed by a total of 5,398 citizens.

The petitioners are asking for confirmation that marriage is and should remain the union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others, and that Parliament will take all necessary steps, within the limits of its jurisdiction, to preserve this definition of marriage in Canada.

For these reasons, the petitioners call on Parliament to take all necessary steps to preserve and uphold in Canada the above-mentioned definition of marriage.

[*English*]

HEALTH

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I too, like some of my colleagues today, would like to present a petition, pursuant to Standing Order 36, of approximately 500 names from the Edmonton, Alberta area and I believe Ontario, as well, calling upon Parliament to provide Canadians with greater access to non-drug preventive and medical options, as well as information about these options, and to sanction the personal choices of Canadians by clarifying the currently vague definitions of food and drugs in the Food and Drugs Act.

It also calls upon Parliament to enact Bill C-420, an act to amend the Food and Drugs Act.

* * *

•(1525)

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Geoff Regan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 247 and 249.

[*Text*]

Question No. 247—**Mr. Chuck Strahl:**

How much has the government spent on advertising to promote the National Child Benefit in 2002 and 2003?

Government Orders

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): The Government of Canada is committed to making Canadians aware of what federal programs are available and how to access them. For 2002-03, there was one campaign focused on the national child benefit, NCB. This campaign was aimed at raising awareness of programs and services supporting children and families and at providing details on where to get more information on these services. The campaign highlighted the national child benefit, NCB program for low income families as there was low awareness of the NCB among the Canadian public. The NCB is a federal/provincial/territorial initiative to which the Government of Canada contributes by increasing the Canada child tax benefit, CCTB, for low income families with children.

As with all federal government advertising campaigns, the campaign was focus-tested for integrity and efficacy to help ensure that it would meet its stated objectives. Post-testing confirmed that the campaign had, indeed, achieved its objectives.

The Government has an obligation to inform Canadians about its services. In order to reach Canadians, the campaign included advertisements in

- over 100 national, local, ethnic and aboriginal TV stations,
- over 100 national and local radio stations,
- about 1,500 daily, weekly, ethnic and aboriginal newspapers, and
- several family targeted monthly magazines.

The cost of this campaign was \$6.5 million.

Question No. 249—**Ms. Judy Wasylcia-Leis:**

Pursuant to Section 3(1) of the Regulations Respecting the Disposition of Seized Property, Seized Property Management Act, how many properties seized since the coming into force of the Regulations have been disposed of: (a) by public tender; and (b) by public auction?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.): Under section 3(1) of the Disposal Regulations of the Seized Property Management Act, properties are defined as any properties seized or restrained by court warrant or forfeited to Her Majesty under various proceeds of crime or controlled drugs and substances offences. This would include all (i) moveable assets, (vehicles, vessels, hydroponic equipment, artworks, furniture etc.), (ii) financial instruments and (iii) real property.

(i)	MOVEABLE ASSETS	TENDER	AUCTION	SOLD DIRECTLY
	5675	3675	1800	200

(ii) Financial Instruments include stocks, bonds, forfeited cash, RRSP's, mutual funds etc. and are not sold by public auction or by public tender. They are sold through brokerages and banks or in the case of cash, deposited directly into Receiver General accounts.

(iii)	REAL PROPERTY	TENDER	AUCTION	MLS	DIRECT SALES
	270	15	nil	230	25

[English]

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

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CANADIAN FORCES SUPERANNUATION ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-37, an act to amend the Canadian Forces Superannuation Act and to make consequential amendments to other acts, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Gary Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to represent the constituents of Saanich—Gulf Islands on this very important bill. I also want to thank the member for Edmonton—Strathcona for switching our times. The two of us switched around.

This is a critically important issue. Bill C-37, an act to amend the Canadian Forces Superannuation Act and to make consequential amendments to other acts, would modernize the Canadian Forces Superannuation Act in order to maintain a competitive pension plan comparable to those in the private sector, keeping in mind the unique working conditions of the Canadian Forces.

Up until now, the Canadian Forces pension plan has been woefully inadequate. I will get into some of those details but at the outset I want to take a minute to talk about the importance of our Canadian Forces.

I believe all members in the House would agree with me that the men and women of the Canadian Forces have done an outstanding job serving all Canadians. They have been put in harm's way. As we know, there have been recent fatalities on some of their missions: Operation Apollo, the war on terrorism, the work in Afghanistan and various peacekeeping missions. These men and women are out there serving us and looking after our interests.

I applaud each and every one of them for the work they do both at home and abroad. It is not just their work abroad. As we know, during the fires this summer in my home province of British Columbia in the interior around Kelowna, up in the Kamloops area and throughout the interior down in the Cranbrook area, the forces were there. When they are called upon their services are unwaivering.

More recently, the member for Fraser Valley, whose new area will be the Pemberton area, and the member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast talked about the recent floods. If the military is required they will be the first to respond when asked to do so.

Government Orders

The forces' commitment to us is unquestionable and we need to offer them the same level of commitment. That is the point that I was trying to make. I applaud all these Canadian men and women. I am pleased we finally have a bill before the House that will modernize the pension act.

I question the government as to why it took so long to bring forward this bill. I hope the bill will actually become law because it is one I support, but we have all been informed that the House will likely rise, adjourn or prorogue on November 7, which is less than three weeks from now. That will be it until some time in the new year when the member for LaSalle—Émard gets the keys to 24 Sussex and tries to come in with a throne speech and do some grandstanding for an election. It is not acceptable.

This bill is just one example of many important issues on which we need to be in this place working. We need to be here looking after the interests of Canadians. We have many critically important issues but this place has virtually come to a grinding halt. Yes, we are here in body, but the problem is that as we look at the government members they are so caught up. The current Prime Minister who resides at 24 Sussex Drive has absolutely no power in the government caucus, and the member for LaSalle—Émard, a backbencher with no tangible power, holds all the real power of the caucus.

Nothing is getting done. This place has become irrelevant. It is so sad. We do not get a clear indication of where the government is going, and there are so many issues that need to be dealt with.

Let me talk about a few of the issues in Bill C-37 and what it would do for the Canadian Forces. Right now under the Canadian Forces pension plan individuals must have continuous service. If there is a break in service they do not qualify. That is not acceptable and this bill would fix that.

• (1530)

The number of pensionable years of service would bring the Canadian Forces Superannuation Act more in line with the Public Service Superannuation Act. The average salary and the number of years contributions were made to the plan would be used to calculate the pension. The bill provides greater flexibility and is more in line with the private sector, as it should be.

It is long overdue that we actually started providing the same level of commitment to the men and women in the Canadian Forces as they have shown us.

Bill C-37 would give our Canadian Forces early access to pension benefits if they choose. Right now they are not entitled to benefits until they reach the age of 60. Under the new plan, although members the Canadian Forces may have the option of retiring early, between the ages of 50 and 60, at a reduced pension, at least they would have other options available and portable. Under the current plan these options are not portable.

I would argue that the most important component is for the reservists. The reservists, a very significant component of our military, would now be included in the Canadian Forces Superannuation Act. At the present time they receive some type of a gratuity, which is equivalent to some severance pay, but they are not looked after.

Some of these reservists were also out fighting the forest fires in British Columbia and protecting Canadians. When called upon they do not quiver. They are there. It is high time we did the same for them.

Those are some of the reasons for some of the changes we see in Bill C-37, a bill that is long overdue. I have to admit that I am skeptical whether the bill will actually become law. I wonder whether it will be like so many other bills in the past that have died on the order paper and are collecting dust. If that were to happen then all the work that is done in the House becomes irrelevant.

I want to make a few more specific points on why it is so important that we look after our troops. Ironically, as we are here debating Bill C-37, trying to look after our troops, acknowledging that we perhaps have not looked after them in the past, we may not have been treating them fairly and perhaps we could do more for them, where has our Prime Minister been?

I will read a press release from the *Ottawa Sun*. In reference to our military our Right Hon. Prime Minister said "But it's never enough. They all need more. And they all have plans for more".

I would like to remind the Prime Minister that the men and women flying the Sea Kings have done an outstanding job. These Sea King helicopters should have been replaced 10 or 15 years ago. I have watched the song and dance year after year in this place about procurement. We still have no idea of what the government is doing. It always says "Wait until tomorrow. It is coming. We have split the contract. The contract has now been put back to the other, the ordinance and the air frame". It is one thing after the other.

The government is always playing politics to ensure that their Liberal friends get a piece of the pie. It manipulates contracts so possibly some Liberal contributor will get his or her fair share of the pie. It is so wrong.

However, when the Prime Minister wants to order two Challenger jets, which were absolutely not needed, those are delivered. He has the whole process run through the House before the ink dries on his signature when he puts his name down that he wants something. When he decides he wants something, 24 hours later it is a done deal through the back door. That is wrong.

The men and women of the Canadian Forces put their lives on the line looking after our needs at home and abroad. We all know about the terrible tragedies we have had abroad involving these men and women. Their fellow comrades, who stood beside them, soldier on the next day. Their commitment is unwaivering. Where is our commitment to them? Why is it so pathetic? Why are we not giving them the tools and resources they need to do the job?

Government Orders

•(1535)

The Prime Minister leaves the impression that they are a bunch of whiny people who always want more and are never happy. He says we have the best equipment and that we are better equipped than anybody else. Oh yes? Maybe the jet the Prime Minister is on is better than that of anybody else in the area and maybe the equipment in which the cabinet is flying around is better than that of anyone else, but it is sure not the case for our men and women. The men and women of 443 Squadron, the Sea King base in Patricia Bay in my riding, never complain. They are out there and they do the very best job. It is the same on the other coast.

But what do we do for them? Again I look at Bill C-37. Our defence critic has recommended that we support it and I agree with him. He says it is high time we did something, but the government is bringing in this bill only weeks before it plans to prorogue. Everybody in this place knows that on November 7 the Prime Minister is hightailing it out of here. I am not sure if he will be golfing; it might be a little cold for him in Ottawa. He is getting out of here because he does not want to be embarrassed when the member for LaSalle—Ernard, who as we know has the real power now, officially gets the power at the Liberal Party convention.

There has been absolutely outstanding cooperation today, unprecedented in the House of Commons, between the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party and the leader of the Canadian Alliance, in the interests of Canadians. I would argue that those two individuals have put the interests of the Canadian people ahead of their own interests and that of their respective parties. That is what we should be doing in this House for our military. We should not be playing politics or playing games.

But the record speaks for itself. It is disgraceful. There is the helicopter replacement program. Also, there are the horror stories we have heard about the equipment our men and women are left with when they are overseas. These men and women are stretched so thin in numbers that they are putting in double and triple time. There have been times when we have had our navy in the gulf and of course there was usually a Sea King on board most of the ships. I have spoken to the commander of the 443. He said he did not have an aircraft in the hangar that he could send out on a ship. Ships had to be sent out without an aircraft on board; then they tried to do a swap overseas. Do hon. members know what that means? Sure, they do a swap when they are overseas, but extra time has to be put in. Yes, there are multiple crews and the military tries to send a crew back, but these people have been worked as they have never been worked before. Their support, as I said earlier, was unwavering. They do not question.

I was on the docks for at least four or five departures of ships to the gulf. I listened to the young men and women with young families who said that they were proud to serve all Canadians. However, where are we? Where are the members of the House for those men and women of the service? We have had a terrible record for the military over the last 10 years as the number of troops have fallen and the budgets have fallen. What is so troubling are the quotes from our Prime Minister, who says they always want more, they are never happy, and they always have a wish list.

I would argue that equipment such as the Sea Kings, with which I am familiar because of my riding, should not be on a wish list at all. It is pathetic that they have to be on a wish list when the Prime Minister, and I keep coming back to this but it is fact, wants a couple of new private jets with marble bathrooms and the works to fly his cabinet ministers around and can have that done before the ink dries on his signature; try to tell me there is not something wrong with that.

Again, the contract was split for the Sea Kings. Originally the contract was up for tender. We have heard this song and dance for so many years now that it is not even funny. We can talk to any military expert: when the contract was split to separate the ordnance and the airframe, it was pure politics. It was not in the interests of anyone. It was not in the interests of the people who fly them. A lot of people pointed fingers, but it was the government playing politics for its friends so that it could control, manipulate and tailor the process and ensure where the contracts would go. That is wrong.

•(1540)

We are going to support this bill, as we should. It is the right thing. It will modernize the pension act for our military people, which needs to be reformed. The reform is long overdue, but I have a great fear about this. I urge the Liberals to show us that they care enough about our servicemen and servicewomen to sit in this House long enough to see this bill get royal assent. I do not think they will. This is just another charade, with them saying they have to get a bill down here or something. Really, it is meaningless, because we are not sure who is in power. One person is living at 24 Sussex, but another one is holding the caucus meetings. One is in charge, but one is not. One has the power of the backbench and one does not.

Canadian people do not care about that. They want to see us make changes in here, but the Liberals have brought in this bill less than three weeks before they plan to prorogue just to waste everybody's time.

If they actually care about the unwavering commitment given by the men and women of our forces, then I challenge every government member to pressure his or her own House leader to make sure we are here after November 7 working on this bill, making sure that it goes to the Senate, and making sure that it gets royal assent. I ask them to show us they care about the men and women of our Canadian Forces.

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, perhaps I am not quite as pessimistic as my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands in that we are debating third reading of Bill C-37 today. I hope that the bill will be passed through the House of Commons in the next few days and that the Senate will sit long enough to see it pass through the other place and indeed get royal assent. I think that is extremely important. That is why I certainly applaud the government for belatedly bringing forward this legislation. As I said in my remarks, it should have been done some five years ago, but as we on the opposition side often say, better late than never.

Government Orders

As my colleague says, it is certainly suspicious. Having gone through a couple of Parliaments, I have noted that just before an impending election there are certain hot topic issues that the government has taken considerable heat over during the lifetime of a Parliament and in the dying days of the Parliament we see it bring forward legislation that does have support from all parties and all sides of the House. Then the government rushes it through, with our support, with our assistance, with our help, so that government members can stand up during an election campaign and say, "Look at all the great and wonderful things we did. We do care about our military because we put through the changes to the superannuation act and changed the pensions and included the reserves", et cetera.

In this case, I will say that I do not care what the reasoning is for it. It is still the right thing to do, belatedly, so I certainly will be supporting these efforts.

I want to comment just briefly on the situation in my home province, the province of my colleague. British Columbia has had an absolutely devastating year. First there were the forest fires and now, as could be noted during question period today, my colleague from West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast has raised concerns about a couple of lives lost, and more feared lost, in the terrible flooding in the lower mainland of British Columbia.

British Columbia right now is reeling. It is bruised and battered. I want to ask my colleague about the specific issue of the removal of regular forces and bases from the mainland of British Columbia.

I think it is unbelievable that this has been allowed to happen and that the base in Chilliwack, for example, was closed down. Nevertheless, that has happened. I would suggest that at a minimum we should have additional militia units, or reserves, in British Columbia, if for no other reason than to react to natural disaster tragedies that occur from time to time, like the flooding and the forest fires.

Despite the fact that the forces from Edmonton did absolutely yeoman service in coming across the Rocky Mountains, getting into British Columbia, and helping to fight those forest fires this summer, I still do believe that communities in British Columbia could be better served with at least additional militia units, if not by having a base there with regular forces on the mainland of British Columbia. The City of Prince George in my riding is one of the cities that has been lobbying hard for that, but so far we have not seen the government move in that regard.

I would put that question to my colleague. What are his thoughts about it, especially given the present disaster situation in B.C.?

• (1545)

Mr. Gary Lunn: Mr. Speaker, I would first like to comment on being so skeptical about whether the government actually means the bill to pass. I need only go back to the government's record. We have seen many important pieces of legislation die on the Order Paper because of politics. This is an important bill for our servicemen and servicewomen, and I hope, as does our defence critic from Prince George—Peace River, that it does receive royal assent.

With respect to closing the base in Chilliwack, greater Vancouver is the largest populated urban area west of Toronto, without question.

An hon. member: By far.

Mr. Gary Lunn: By far, no question. Greater Vancouver is a very important economic centre, with a huge population base, both in the city and in all the surrounding communities in the Fraser Valley.

This goes back to the government's commitment to the Canadian Forces. The government shut down the base in Chilliwack. There is now no land base in the province of British Columbia. The navy is on the west coast and there are some air force wings up in Comox, but this is not acceptable. The land bases should be there.

What it comes down to is how the services across Canada have been cut drastically and how those that are there are overworked or stretched thin. I believe the Auditor General would acknowledge this. She has written reports in the past in which she has indicated that it is now very difficult for the forces to meet their obligations with current numbers.

By all means, I agree with the member. At a minimum, the government must start putting back the militia. We need greater militia in these areas. They are an integral part of the Canadian Forces and can serve us very well.

Again it comes back to the government's record. It speaks for itself with what the government has done, whether it be the Sea Kings, shutting down the base in Chilliwack, cutting the budgets, or cutting the number of servicemen and servicewomen in our forces. This is about the government's commitment to the military. The government should think about the unwavering commitment of our military to all Canadians and to us. The government should try giving back to these men and women just a fraction of what they have given to us and our country, and they then would be a whole lot better off.

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill C-37, an act to amend the Canadian Forces Superannuation Act and to make consequential amendments to other acts.

It always gives me great pleasure to rise in the House especially when I see that there is so much interest among so many members to hear my wisdom and what I bring to this debate, namely to take that advice and hopefully use it in the future.

Being from Edmonton, I would begin by identifying the fact that I and others in Edmonton are lucky to have the Canadian Forces base located there. Members of the Canadian armed forces in Edmonton always do a great job as they do right across this country.

I particularly want to identify, as my colleague from Prince George—Peace River did, the work of the Edmonton base this summer when it came to providing assistance in battling fires and helping Canadians to safety in the interior of B.C. and around Kelowna. They put a lot of effort and work into that, risking their lives as usual. I want to acknowledge that because we were all proud of the work they did to help Canadians during that very troubling time.

Government Orders

I would like to focus on what the bill would do and what it would mean for members of the armed forces. This legislation makes changes to the pension benefit scheme provided under the Canadian Forces Superannuation Act which includes a reduction in the minimum qualifying period for a pension to two years, tying benefit eligibility to years of pensionable service rather than completion of a period of engagement in the Canadian Forces, and an immediate pension to a person who has completed 25 years of paid service and has at least 2 years of pensionable service.

As we have heard from colleagues across the House, all members believe that we owe this type of pension benefit to the men and women of the armed forces. They do an incredible job to protect Canadians, sometimes in combat situations, peacekeeping situations and also by promoting our values and interests in helping people realize their freedom around the world. Not many people would ever argue against those sort of changes.

The bill would provide regulation-making authority to adapt the provisions of the act so as to apply it to prescribed members of the reserve force and to deal with other matters, such as elective service, that are presently provided for in the act. It would consolidate a number of the regulation-making powers in the act and would make certain structural improvements to the act, such as moving general provisions that are presently in part I of the act to part IV and making those provisions applicable to the whole act.

On this side of the House we in the opposition are obviously in favour of the bill because it would improve the conditions of our armed forces. We support our veterans as has been shown in numerous question periods, especially on recent issues where we are fighting for benefits for the spouses of veterans.

We also support our military. We have said that on numerous occasions despite some of the things we heard in today's question period. The opposition has always called for better respect for our armed forces by increasing the amount of funding that would be given to the military seeing that we have some huge challenges. I will be discussing those during my speech, particularly equipment and personnel challenges that our military will be facing in the future.

Last spring the Canadian Alliance put out a white paper on defence called "The New North Strong and Free". We identified a number of strengths and weaknesses, and made some recommendations as to what needed to be addressed to improve the state of our military.

It is our mission statement of how our government should run the defence department and how we would allow the armed forces to once again flourish. The paper contains 33 recommendations. It is unfortunate that after 10 years of mismanagement by the government and the former finance minister, soon to be leader of that party, must take some responsibility for this. He has allowed the military to practically fall apart and we need to take 33 steps to get where it should be today.

• (1550)

Here are some quick facts about what has happened to the military under the watch of the current government. The regular force personnel strength has fallen by 30% since 1993. Our military has no

heavy air or sealift capacity. During the 2002 mission in Afghanistan, Canada could not sustain 800 troops for longer than six months. We only put three ships to sea instead of the proposed six.

Most Canadians have heard the dreadful stories about our Sea Kings. This is their 40th year and they will not be replaced until 2007. This is 14 years after the Liberal government had already cancelled the original helicopter contract. Even today in question period the Minister of National Defence talked about how that side of the House was working diligently to solve this problem. Going at this rate, we will probably not see any changes for another 10 years and that is just unacceptable. We have had some serious problems with those Sea Kings.

Our tribal class destroyers are 33 years old and there is not even a plan to replace them. Our CF-18 fighter aircraft have been reduced to 80 from 122. There are no army helicopters to support our troops in the field in an age where troop mobility is a prime concern.

There was, of course, the unfortunate situation recently where some of our troops were killed in the line of duty in Afghanistan. The jeeps were proven deadly for our soldiers because the Liberal government was not willing to properly purchase the jeeps that were required, not only for combat ready situations but in peacekeeping roles as well.

Our men and women go out in peacekeeping roles, but they need to be able to protect themselves. We in the House, and the government especially, need to equip these men and women to do just that and not send them out half prepared to do battle, especially at certain times when they have to protect themselves, let alone the missions that they are on while on the ground.

The former finance minister and the Liberals have dismissed the military as unimportant following the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the U.S.S.R. There has been a real decline in the attitude of the government toward the military because it feels there are no more threats in the world.

Obviously, that has been proved to be quite a wrong attitude to have, especially in light of world events that we have seen. Here in North America all of us know the tragic event that took place on September 11, and the significance of that particular event as we are moving forward in the world and what sort of challenges we face in not only helping to protect people around the world, but protecting the security of North America.

The terrorist attacks totally changed the strategic environment in which Canada operates. This pertains not only to our home turf now, but in the role we play internationally. Our best ally, the United States, has declared a war on terrorism. This is a war that we said we support in Canada and we will do what we can to help stamp out terrorism around the world.

However, from the work that has been done on the other side of the House by the government, it seems that the Liberals have only paid lip service to this particular commitment. They have ignored our responsibilities to our allies in Iraq and have not properly equipped our troops for Afghanistan, which is a shame.

Government Orders

We on this side of the House recognize the significance of what happened on September 11. We have pushed the Liberals to focus on both security domestically and abroad. Domestically, the Liberals have failed, especially the minister responsible for customs, who touts her border policies, but then starves our customs agents of the resources necessary to do their jobs.

I have stood in the House in question period on a number of occasions pointing to the fact that the strength of our military has to be linked to how serious we take security here at home, but the minister continues to dismiss those arguments saying that the government is doing all it can. However, when we look not only at the condition of our military and the resources that it has to do its job, the same can be said for our front line customs officers being starved. They do not have the right resources to protect Canadians.

It is a shame that in this day and age, after saying it was going to beef up border security, we have not seen any of the money that was put aside since the anti-terrorist legislation was passed. No money has actually trickled down to the front lines for basic things like computers and resources for our customs agents. So, domestically the Liberals have failed, especially the minister in charge of customs.

● (1555)

Significantly, the government has also starved our military and its ability to do its job. Let us go over defence funding. Recently in question period, we heard one of the Liberal members on the other side say it was actually the opposition that was not committed to defence. I do not know which planet he is on to suggest that sort of thing.

However, let us go over the government's record because that is where the facts speak much louder than any words that have come across from the other side of the floor.

The former finance minister, soon to be Prime Minister, slashed \$20 billion from the defence department since 1993. Mr. Speaker, could you imagine what sort of impact that has had on our military? If government members want to talk about facts and who is committed to our military, let us look at that one. It is a significant number.

The Auditor General told the defence committee that the armed forces will face a \$30 billion deficit in equipment by 2012. That is a huge challenge that our military is facing in the future. We are at the bottom of the G-8 and NATO in defence spending, at \$7.7 billion per annum.

The government could counter these destructive trends by implementing our recommendation No. 2 that was outlined in the white paper that I spoke about earlier.

It calls for an increase in the defence budget which should be accelerated to provide an additional \$1.2 billion per year over and above the increases in the 2003 federal budget bringing the immediate increases to \$2 billion per year. It is money that is required right away to bring the standards of our military up to a level where it would have the resources to fight the fights that it may have to take part in through our obligations around the world. That does not even include the commitments we need to make in order to bring the equipment up to par so that we do not have this huge deficit in the future.

We go further in the next recommendation saying that defence spending must be increased to NATO standards. We have an obligation to meet our commitments, especially our international commitments, where other countries rely on us to do so. We are a member of NATO, yet year after year we are failing on those commitments because the government has not put the resources in place, especially when it comes to our military. These are standards that the government, and especially the former finance minister, has totally ignored.

If we are to undo the damage done by this particular government, it is more than just a funding issue. It is a personnel issue and that is what I spoke about when I said there were challenges on both sides, equipment and personnel.

We need to increase the regular force to 80,000 individuals. We have had quite a reduction over the years, but it would be necessary to meet our obligations, especially if we look at some of the challenges where we have troops rotating out of Afghanistan. There is also a call for further peacekeeping resources in Iraq and here at home in getting our military involved in assisting with natural disasters. We need to increase the number of troops. That is a significant problem that we are facing.

The reserves should also be increased to 60,000 from 45,000 individuals. Many of them are army militia.

We must specifically address the different branches of our military. If we look at the different branches, there are some real big challenges in every area, whether it is the army, the air force or the navy.

I will take a moment to identify those challenges so Canadians at home can see the real picture of what we are facing.

We need to expand our special forces in the army, especially the JTF-2. That is something we found over the last little while. We have really been stretched to the limit. Afghanistan has proven the need for these special forces. The JTF-2 distinguished itself there, and there are types of missions that would be very important for us. We must ensure that we address that particular resource, especially the need for which our allies often call upon us to take part in.

We need to pay special attention to the rapid deployment of our soldiers. To that end, we would establish an airborne unit and equip it with the appropriate helicopters. As I said earlier, it is a shame that we had not dealt with the Sea King earlier. It should have been dealt with a long time ago.

● (1600)

Additionally, to fulfill our role as peacekeepers and peacemakers, we need to be able to deploy and sustain a brigade overseas. That is something as we have seen in recent years that has been a real challenge given the current numbers in our armed forces.

We also need to be able to replace old equipment with appropriate new equipment. I spoke a little about that before.

Government Orders

We should also recruit more individuals into the ranks of the army. That proud tradition is something we have to instill again. We have to share that proud tradition with more Canadians when it comes to our armed forces, the work they have done over our history and the work they continue to do. We need to have all Canadians respect and cherish that and actually want to see that commitment remain strong. Unfortunately that is something which I do not think the government has done well in promoting, for Canadians to be proud of that work and sustain that work of our men and women in the armed forces.

Moving to the air force, we need to modernize our fleet of CF-18s and the Aurora aircraft so they can work side by side with our allies. We need to look at the future, including participating in the joint strike fighter project with the U.K. and the U.S.A. We also need a heavy strategic airlift capability to move personnel and equipment throughout Canada and around the globe. As I said, given the challenges we are facing in the coming years, especially if we want to maintain our role as significant peacekeepers around the world, that is something we need to address immediately.

The final part of the military I would like to address is the navy. This is another area about which we have heard different stories. Clearly we need to look at the facts of what has happened and see how we can address them to improve the condition of our navy.

Personnel need to be increased immediately so our ships are no longer understaffed and strained to the limit. We have seen that in recent rotations in Afghanistan. It has been a big personnel problem.

We need a proper fleet of submarines to maintain our sovereignty in the north, but also to be deployed whenever they are needed. The recommendations we have made would have us increase the numbers by three subs on each coast. As well, our ships and the actual equipment supporting them are getting old. We need to replace them and expand the fleet by at least four ships. That is evident by what happened recently in Afghanistan where we had to bring one of our ships back home because of the challenges it had while it was at sea.

I already talked about the Sea King helicopters. There is no excuse; those should be replaced immediately.

I have talked about the record of the government. I have made recommendations. Obviously we on this side are supporting Bill C-37 because we want to continue to make that commitment to our armed personnel and our defence forces. It is something we cannot neglect and we need to be able to support that.

I want to end on a positive note and share a personal story which I have shared before in the House. It is about the pride that many people feel, whether they are recent Canadians or whether their families have had longstanding traditions in the military.

My family was fortunate enough to come to Canada in the early 1970s. I was only a baby. We were kicked out of a country, Uganda, and we were able to flee as refugees to Canada. Canada welcomed us with open arms and gave us the freedom and opportunities where, 25 years after coming here, a son of refugee parents is able to sit in the House of Commons, debate policy and basically try to improve our nation's abilities and become respected internationally. Canada gave us this opportunity.

There is always a real respect from people coming to Canada for its role which people have seen and heard about around the world: leading peacekeeping, leading freedom fighting missions, helping other countries and allies, and helping countries in need. Canada demonstrated that to our family when we came here.

Even though Canada was not involved in a military role in Uganda, it still had troops helping out to make sure people could get out and safely come to Canada. That sort of pride is something I grew up with and heard about from my family, even though we were not directly involved in the freedom that our military forces over history have provided Canadians prior to our coming here. We need to instill that pride in future generations and to Canadians who see the work that can be done and the leadership that can be provided by our men and women in the armed forces. I am proud to be able to speak to their accomplishments up to now.

This particular bill is a small step forward and will deal with the pension changes for our men and women in the forces. Let us look forward. Let us actually make the commitments that are required to continue to make people like myself and other Canadians proud of our military tradition, and to be able to meet those requirements that they are going to have in the future. Let us hope the government will listen to some of the recommendations we have made.

• (1605)

Ms. Val Meredith (South Surrey—White Rock—Langley, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague on an excellent speech on this issue.

I have visited Borden which is a training facility for the Canadian armed forces. I was very impressed with the various aspects of training that our armed forces do, not only young people but a lot of people who in mid-life decide to look at the armed forces as a place of employment.

Does my colleague think that the federal government should put more resources into the aspect of training Canadians, both young and older? Should it use that element of federal responsibility to make sure that we get an educated population who can use it not only when they are employed by the armed forces but when they go back to civilian life?

• (1610)

Mr. Rahim Jaffer: Mr. Speaker, my colleague from South Surrey—White Rock—Langley is absolutely right. We could do a lot more when it comes to the federal government's position as I spoke about to try to instill some pride, to try to engage Canadians in getting involved with our military. The member is absolutely right that there needs to be some effort made by the government especially in targeting certain parts of the population.

I remember that while growing up, aside from learning in school about our military history, there was not really an effort made at the school level to recruit young people into the reserve forces or even into the armed forces. That has started to be done relatively recently. We could do a lot more of that, especially in Edmonton where a base is located. I have spoken to a lot of the young men and women who are serving there. They have said that is something they would like to see happen, to have more government effort made to raise the ranks of younger people getting involved in the military, to some extent in serving our nation.

Government Orders

We saw a sharp rise in that after the attacks of 9/11. More people were wanting to get involved to learn more about our military history and to prepare themselves in case there were any potential attacks even here in Canada. People would be more equipped to deal with certain unfortunate situations that would arise from an attack.

Clearly the interest is there among Canadians. We need to encourage it from the federal government level. We need to target certain groups in schools and in other areas to consider getting involved even on a voluntary basis with the military. That is something the government could focus on to bring that pride and tradition back to our military.

Mr. Grant McNally (Dewdney—Alouette, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, our military personnel do an outstanding job defending freedom around the world. Our military has done an outstanding job here at home, especially when called on during emergency situations as we saw most recently with the fires that happened in Kelowna, British Columbia.

We know that the Liberals have underfunded the military for 10 years. The military needs the resources. It needs the funding in order to do the job properly. That funding needs to be increased obviously. The Alliance has called for increased funding for a long time and the government has ignored that.

I ask my colleague to comment on the funding aspect of the military and what the Liberals have done by neglecting their responsibility to adequately fund the military.

Mr. Rahim Jaffer: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Dewdney—Alouette for his most appropriate question. The debate we are having today is about the condition of our armed forces and especially the condition of our soldiers when it comes to their pension requirements and especially when it comes to the problems of funding that we find ourselves in because of the lack of commitment from government members over the last 10 years.

I talked in my speech about the funding cuts that we have seen, unfortunately. The government has been scrambling over the years to try to increase some of the funding in certain areas that have been hit so hard. When it comes to the way the military men and women can do their jobs, in spite of the government, they still do a great job.

Specifically when we look at the record of the soon to be prime minister who was the former finance minister during the time of the majority of the cuts to defence, close to \$20 billion which I identified in my speech were taken out of the military budget. That is incredible. How can we expect the military that is so revered around the world to meet the commitments on a daily basis, let alone on an international basis with our commitments with our allies, with the incredible cut to that particular funding?

Now we are seeing a complete flip-flop by the soon to be prime minister saying that he has a strong commitment to the military and he is going to make that a priority. Where was he over the last 10 years when he was in charge of signing those cheques? He was absent as he is usually in some of the debates that we are having.

Clearly, if the government is going to talk about the military and talk about its commitment to defence, my hon. colleague has it right. The government sure has not demonstrated it over the last 10 years. I question the new prime minister's motives when he talks about the

idea of committing to the military. How in fact can we trust him to do that? He has talked the talk before but he sure did not walk the walk.

• (1615)

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is important to recognize the lack of resources that have gone into the military over the last several years. This is all about choices. Decisions have to be made about where we want to spend money. A good example is the well noted \$20 billion shortfall and that is one-twentieth of the long gun registry.

What choices would my colleague suggest be made to allow those resources to go to the military? For example, we are in the stage of tax cuts of \$50 billion or \$100 billion. What other suggestions does he have for getting those resources to our military personnel and also the equipment that they need?

Mr. Rahim Jaffer: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Windsor West for his most appropriate question. I would like to congratulate him for his diligence in fighting for customs agents in and around the Windsor area and security at our borders. We have worked together on a couple of other issues as well.

He hit the nail on the head when he talked about priorities. Let us talk about the government's priorities and how it has spent Canadians' money.

We can identify a number of what we on this side of the House call boondoggles when it comes to how the government spent Canadians' money. It could do so much more good if its priorities were set straight. If the Liberals' priorities are vote buying, clearly that is something they are masters of and they have done very well. We can talk about things like the gun registry and things like corporate welfare where the Liberals have given millions of dollars to their friends in various companies depending on who they are. We can talk about sponsorship grants. How much abuse do taxpayers have to take before they wake up and tell the government to be accountable for what it is doing?

The hon. member mentioned the gun registry. If we took those resources and put them into something that Canadians feel strongly about, our military for example, there would be overwhelming support to do that over some of the government's shameful priorities.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Marcil (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not exactly have a question; it is more of a comment.

First, I am very pleased to see that the hon. members of the opposition will be supporting this bill. In my opinion, this is a positive gesture toward the people who represent us in so many corners of the world.

But their speeches are a bit beyond me. To listen to the hon. members, one would think we needed three more submarines here, four more ships there, 20 CF-18s somewhere else, and so on.

I think they are completely out of touch with Canada. Canadians are not known as a nation of warriors. Canada is a country that uses its defence and military capabilities for peace throughout the world.

Government Orders

Perhaps the hon. members should consider the role we wish to give our soldiers. They should not limit themselves to the rhetoric of “warriors”—the word is a bit stronger than I would like—people who would like Canadians to be equipped with the same highly developed weapons as the Americans, which would fit neatly into the American military, because their goal is more one of military intervention. We have a different goal.

They should perhaps tone down the rhetoric.

[*English*]

Mr. Rahim Jaffer: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is missing the point when it comes to resourcing our military. We are not talking about building up an arms race or trying to compete with other countries that are obviously positioned in a superpower status. We are talking about what Canada can do well in its role as a middle power and one that has been respected around the world, especially when it comes to peacekeeping and when it comes to being prepared in combat ready situations to help our allies. That is what we are talking about.

Even in doing what the armed forces have done so well over the years, the government has failed in resourcing our armed forces. The hon. member should take some responsibility for that because that is what we are debating today. Even though the government has taken a small step with Bill C-37, ultimately we still have a host of issues that are affecting our military. Those issues need to be addressed by the government. I do not know whether it will do that leading into the next election. It has failed the military up until now and I do not expect it to turn any new corner to help it out in the future.

• (1620)

Ms. Val Meredith (South Surrey—White Rock—Langley, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I will not take much time. I would be remiss if I did not put some comments on the record.

I have listened with interest to not only what my colleagues have said, but also to the questions or comments coming from across the floor. I think Canadians need to understand that Bill C-37 is just one small attempt to rectify one small problem in a very large issue; that is the government's lack of support for the Canadian military.

This is not something new. I think if Canadians put their minds back to Liberal governments over the past, it has been a consistent ploy of Liberal governments, present and past, to undermine and underfund the Canadian military. It seems to me it was a Liberal cabinet minister who at one time thought he would put all the divisions of the military under one umbrella and take away the pride in being navy, air force or army. That did not bode well.

The problem in the past with the Liberal government is that it does it without any kind of understanding of what the armed forces are, any debate with Canadians as to what Canadians want and it does it for political purposes, not for logical and reasonable purposes.

Decisions that have made with the present Liberal government have only shown that things have not changed and are not likely to change.

I come from a constituency in British Columbia, the province which is most likely to have an earthquake. It is the province that had forest fires during the summer because of our large forested areas,

and it suffers from these fires. B.C. has mountains and rivers and is often subject to floods. There is a real need, not only in British Columbia, but in Quebec, in Atlantic Canada and in Canada's north for a strong military support for domestic reasons. It does not always have to be international concerns. However for domestic concerns and events, it would be a great thing to have a strong military presence.

The land forces base in the lower mainland was closed, not for logical reasons but for political reasons. I talked with a gentleman who sat on the committee when it was reviewing the military bases across Canada. He told me that Chilliwack was not even on the list. It was not even recommended that it be closed. However that decision was made between Quebec City and Ottawa. It was a political decision, with no logical background. That is reality.

The Liberal government may be concerned that Canadians will find out why these decisions were made. However, the point is the Chilliwack base was closed. If there were a major earthquake, the airport would not be usable because it happens to be in a part of Richmond that would probably be soup, if it existed at all. How in heaven's name is any military presence going to get to where it is most needed?

I want to suggest that it is time for the next government to really focus on what Canadians want from their military. Canadians do want our Canadian military to do a peacekeeping role, but they want much more than that.

Canadians want our Canadian military to provide protection for their own country. They want the Canadian military to have the resources to provide domestic responses. I would suggest that Canadians would like to see our military be a place where our young people could find not only employment, but service to their country. As a result of finding service to their country, of giving some of themselves to Canada, in return they would get training which they could use when they left the military.

The federal government should be doing something to help our young people with education. It should not be giving away millions and millions of dollars for an elite few. It should be providing a training ground for many young people who cannot get into the university system. That is a role the Canadian government can play and should play through our military resources.

I am another voice that says the government has neglected our Canadian military. When it wants to cut its budget, where is the first place it goes? It is increasing rents to our military personnel who are serving their country. It is reducing the budget for materials and training that they need. The Canadian military is the first place the Liberal government goes to cut its budget; that and health care. It is time for Canadians to stand up and indicate that this is not good enough and is not acceptable.

Government Orders

Hon. David Collette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I hate to sit here on a Monday afternoon and have my colleague across the way subject the House to some misinformation. The fact is the Reform Party at the time was fully in agreement with the major budgetary cuts the government made in 1994-95.

Canadian Forces base Chilliwack was one that was certainly a candidate for closure. She states that because Chilliwack is no longer operational, in the case of disaster this will be awful for British Columbia. We just went through a disaster with the forest fires and the fact is 2,000 defence personnel participated in fighting those fires. They had no problem getting into the interior of British Columbia and many of them came from the naval base at Esquimalt.

●(1625)

Also, there are thousands of troops, as the hon. member from Edmonton just stated, based in Edmonton. The hon. member should know that in this day and age we can quickly transport troops by helicopter or by plane to various parts of Canada when there are dire emergencies. Whether it was the floods in the Saguenay, or the floods in the Red River, or the forest fires this year or, as the Minister of National Defence said this afternoon, in the case of any requirement being made by the government of British Columbia for the current flooding in B.C., the Canadian military is there and will be able to get on the job.

Ms. Val Meredith: Mr. Speaker, I assume that was a statement as opposed to a question because I did not hear a question. My response to that is this. I talked to an individual who said that he sat on the committee that was recommending those selections. I have to say that there was no reason that he would misinform me or that he would lead me astray. I have no reason to doubt that information was accurate.

If the minister is not aware of what happened when he was defence minister, that is not my problem. That is his problem.

As far as—

Hon. David Collette: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The hon. member has questioned what I have just said. I was the minister at the time and I knew what was happening. I knew which bases were on the list. That is why we made the information—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): That is not really a point of order. It is debate. Let us give an opportunity for the hon. member for South Surrey—White Rock—Langley to answer the comment.

Ms. Val Meredith: Mr. Speaker, I would like to continue by saying there have been many occasions when the roads have been closed between Alberta and British Columbia. Unless the minister has not been out there lately, there are many mountain ranges between Edmonton and Vancouver. There are many times when if it is not avalanches, it is mud slides or rock slides that close those areas to land transportation.

I repeat that if there were a major event in the lower mainland because of an earthquake and the airport was underground, they would be hard pressed to get any help there.

It is also a situation where there are many marine incidents and the U.S. coast guard comes to the aid of Canadians in distress because our Canadian navy does not have the response vessel. Because the

Coast Guard is underfunded as well, the American coast guard is called upon to help Canadians in distress in our area.

I think the government shows a real lack of knowledge and a lack of respect of the Canadian armed forces when it is trying to convince Canadians that all is well. All is not well and it is time the government acknowledged it.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one of the underlying themes that we have been discussing, and I would like to get the hon. member's opinion on this, is we have a number of different issues stacking up in the military, be it helicopters, ships, planes or jeeps. Not only am I concerned with this issue, but I am concerned with the history of the government over the last 10 years on other hard infrastructure, whether it be bridges, roads, water treatment plants or other infrastructure issues, which have been left to derelict for so long. I am concerned that young Canadians who enter the workforce later in life, who have a more difficult time securing full time employment and saving for the future will have to pay for this with limited resources.

How does she feel about this situation?

●(1630)

Ms. Val Meredith: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for giving me an opportunity to expound my feelings on infrastructure. I have long let it be known how I feel about the government taking gasoline taxes from provinces and not returning them by putting them back into transportation infrastructure. I would suggest that the government is renegeing on its responsibilities by taxing Canadians.

A number of years ago the former finance minister added 3% taxation on gasoline to bring the debt under control and to balance the budget. However that 3% is still there and it is not being used for infrastructure.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): I remind the hon. member that we are dealing with veterans' pensions.

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, given the comments and the heckling from the Minister of Transport today, no wonder the Liberals do so poorly in every election in British Columbia.

For him to heckle, as we heard earlier, and for him to brag that he made the decision to kill the base in Chilliwack for cost efficiency, which provided no land base regular force presence in mainland British Columbia, is absolutely unbelievable. However it does show, perhaps, why one of the decisions of the soon to be former prime minister to remove the member as the minister of national defence during the Somali debacle, to demote him and eventually give him the crumb of Minister of Transport was probably—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): I am sorry to interrupt but the member is really going on a slide.

If the hon. member for South Surrey—White Rock—Langley wants to add anything, there is about a minute and a half left, but on the matter that preoccupies us, please.

Ms. Val Meredith: Mr. Speaker, the issues being raised are the reasons why Canadians in western Canada are hesitant to put their support behind a Liberal government. There is a lack of response and understanding of our concerns.

Government Orders

The government cannot understand that British Columbians have this thing hanging over their heads called earthquake alley. We are concerned about the ability of emergency services to respond to a serious earthquake in the lower mainland, where millions of people live. That is not an unrealistic concern.

The fact is we know from past experience that the mountains cause a barrier. As good as the base might be in Edmonton and as good as the people are, we are concerned they may not be able to get to us. That is a very real concern. The fact that the government does not understand and refuses to understand should concern all western Canadians.

Mr. Grant McNally (Dewdney—Alouette, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I too must add a few comments in this debate given where we have just gone and where we need to go yet on this topic. I will not promise to take a long time, because we do not know how this debate will evolve a little later.

I do want to add my comments of support for the military. I think it is a good thing that we are moving forward with this bill. I am the son of a veteran. My father was in the forces during World War II as a member of the navy. I saw first-hand from him the commitment that he made during that period of time and, something I have mentioned in the House before and will mention again, I saw the scars he lived with as a result of making the decision to contribute to the freedom not only of our country but of the world at that time. It is a price one pays that can really never be measured. We need to uphold and support our veterans and we need to give adequate resources to our current personnel in all the tasks they are undertaking, whether here at home or abroad.

I want to mention Chilliwack because it did come up in debate. I have to point out to the minister that Chilliwack is not far from my own riding. It is about a 45 minute drive from my own hometown. I have to point out the geography of the lower mainland and elaborate on my colleague's point, because we do have some serious concerns in British Columbia. Should there be a major earthquake in that area, we have limited heavy lift capability within our forces. If there is a major earthquake, even if the equipment could be brought over from Edmonton, where are those planes going to land?

On this question, I am astounded that this was brought up by the minister as well. My colleague, our critic for defence, brought up the point that the minister was bragging about closing down Chilliwack. That has had a serious impact on people's concerns about what would happen should there be a major disaster such as an earthquake in the lower mainland or in B.C. It is a question that simply has not been answered, which points out and highlights the fact that the Liberals have starved our military of adequate resources and funding for the past 10 years during which they have been in power.

Military spending needs to be increased. There was no commitment from the former finance minister when he was in cabinet for 10 years. As my colleague from Edmonton mentioned earlier, how can we possibly trust him to follow through as the next prime minister on commitments he is talking about now in regard to increasing military spending? I would say to Canadians that we cannot. I would say to look at the previous record; it will indicate future performance. On that point, the next leader of the Liberal Party fails woefully because of his record in that regard.

I simply want to point out again that in this debate we appreciate the opportunity to talk about our military personnel and we want to commend them for the job they do, often under very difficult circumstances and with limited resources. They do an outstanding job and we are proud of our Canadian Forces personnel. We are not proud of our government and the way that it has cut the military's funding for 10 years and made its job tougher and tougher to do. It has extended the military in so many ways and in so many different places without giving it the resources that are required to do the job properly.

• (1635)

Mr. Darrel Stinson (Okanagan—Shuswap, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the member has raised a number of concerns. With regard to what he was saying about Canadian Forces Base Chilliwack in British Columbia being closed down, I believe that was the last land base in British Columbia for the armed forces.

Scientists have proven that sooner or later there will be a major earthquake in the Hope region, possibly between Hope and Chilliwack or maybe just a bit above Hope, which is not very far from Vancouver. We have seen the devastation of the fires this summer and now we see the devastation of the floods, yet we have no emergency response team from the forces. We no longer have a land base out there.

With all these cutbacks, I must say that I find it very worrisome that the Government of Canada would totally disregard the fact that a province the size of British Columbia has no emergency response team or actually no help there. The nearest help would have to come from Edmonton. In some cases, we would be looking at 24 to 48 hours. Anyone who has been in a flood or a fire or who has ever witnessed an earthquake knows that is a long time. What does the hon. member think about that situation?

Mr. Grant McNally: Mr. Speaker, obviously the closure of Chilliwack has caused grave concern throughout British Columbia and the Vancouver region, where millions of people live. I will make the point again that there is heavy equipment in Edmonton, yes, but should there be an earthquake it is going to be awfully tough to transport that equipment through mountains if the roads are blocked or wiped out. The airports where those planes would land, should we be able to get them in, possibly also are going to be damaged by any earthquake.

I think it was simply a wrong-headed decision to close Chilliwack. It showed a lack of foresight. It showed a lack of looking at the big picture for the entire country, respecting all regions of the country and looking at what was required for the province of British Columbia.

We hate to say "we told you so" after the fact, because damage that could be done to property and lives is something from which there could never be a recovery. We hope and pray that the situation will not occur, but a decision was taken by the government and, should something happen, it will be responsible for that decision. It would be unfortunate, but being in government means making decisions and having to live with the decisions that are made. This is one decision which the government should admit was wrong, rather than continuing to try to defend it all these years later.

Government Orders

It has done the same thing with the Sea Kings, as has been mentioned today, helicopters that are as old as I am. They are 41 years old; I guess I am giving away my age. Again, this government has defended cancelling a contract 10 years ago, a contract that would have seen those helicopters replaced, rather than admitting it made a mistake and that it needs to get on with ordering the appropriate equipment. The government will not do that, just like it will not do that with the decision it made about Chilliwack.

That is unfortunate. What are Canadians left with? Let us look at another alternative. Let us look at replacing this group that refuses to admit it has made mistakes and bad decisions that have affected all Canadians.

• (1640)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): On veterans' pensions? The hon. member for Prince George—Peace River.

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure whether it is appropriate for the Speaker to call relevance. I think that normally it is left to other members to make that assessment and bring the Speaker's attention to it.

The fact of the matter is that part of Bill C-37 deals with changes to the superannuation act governing not only our regular forces now, but with the changes to the reserves, and it deals with quality of life issues. I referred to that during my remarks, as did the Minister of National Defence. I note that this is at the bottom of some of the comments being made by my colleague from Dewdney—Alouette.

Unfortunately, what we have seen from this Liberal government over the past decade is a decline in the quality of life of the people who serve and are willing to put their lives on the line for us, not only overseas but in meeting domestic emergencies here as well.

During question period today, I asked the government a question that really drives home this point. At a time like this, when our men and women are fully engaged in the war on terror, many either going to or returning from deployment overseas, there is great anxiety and worry about loved ones, about whether they will even return and what they will be subjected to while they are overseas. When all of this is going on in the lives of these young families, they are being subjected as of November 1 to yet another rent increase for housing on bases across the nation. In many cases, this housing is in deplorable condition; it is substandard and well below what we would assess as appropriate.

I wonder if my colleague would comment, because he referred to the fact that all of these changes happened under the watch of the member for LaSalle—Émard, the former finance minister. These cuts were made by him. They affected the quality of life of every man, woman and child in our Canadian armed forces families and they continue to affect them adversely. I, like the member for Dewdney—Alouette, am greatly concerned about the hypocrisy of that member at this point.

Mr. Grant McNally: Mr. Speaker, Bill C-37 does talk about quality of life issues. My colleague asks a question about the next leader of the Liberal Party, the former finance minister. In essence, he asks how the former minister can be trusted to ensure that the quality of life issues for our military are improved under his watch when he has been responsible, in large part, for the quality of life

problems facing our military personnel right now. I have said before, and I will say it again, that his past record should be an indicator to people about future performance. Given his past record I would say that his future performance will be very poor in this regard and that Canadians should not trust everything he says, which is that he has all the solutions to all problems, because it is simply untrue.

Our military needs to know that should the Alliance have the honour of governing this country, not only have we continued to say that the military will be a priority, but we will make the military a priority in the ways that we have laid out. We will be committed to that because it is the right thing to do.

• (1645)

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I want to make an observation about something I am familiar with, because I have a son in the military service. Although that military is the United States military, I want to let the member know that I have made some comparisons because I have had other opportunities to visit the military throughout Canada.

My son has been in the military for approximately 10 years. He was at different bases throughout the United States during his training. He is at present in Iraq. His family is living in housing at a military base in Germany.

At all times during his years when he had his family, they had housing. He had two children and a wife in Fort Stewart and Fort Lewis, Washington. His mother and I managed to visit him on a number of occasions. The housing was excellent. If it was on a base, it was free. If it was off base, it was subsidized. He was given a supplement to help pay for their needs. All these things were well looked after. It provides parents some comfort when they know that their child—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): I am sorry, but there is no time left on the clock. I will give the hon. member for Dewdney—Alouette a minute to respond, if he wishes.

Mr. Grant McNally: Mr. Speaker, I will simply sum up by saying that my colleague from Wild Rose is one the hardest working members of Parliament. Whatever his critic's role is, he travels the country, whether it is in his role as Solicitor General critic, when he travels to visit the prisons, or whether it is in working with the Indian affairs department, when he visits across the country talking to people.

He knows what he is talking about, and in this situation he is talking about his own family. He has highlighted the fact that when a government makes something a priority, like the United States has with military housing, it makes a difference, and that if our government were to do that it would make a difference in the lives of our personnel here at home. It needs to be done.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Pursuant to Standing Order 38, it is my duty to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Windsor West, Public Safety; the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, Health.

Government Orders

[English]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure, on behalf of the New Democratic Party, to speak to Bill C-37, an act to amend the Canadian Forces Superannuation Act and to make consequential amendments to other acts.

One of the most important themes of the bill is that it would improve the quality of life of those individuals who serve in our military and, whether they are reservists or not, they have the right and entitlement to pursue good employment and living standards. The bill would assist them in their pensionable earnings and give them a higher quality of life once their service is completed.

I would like to touch on a recent experience that hammers home the importance for us to show leadership and support for our military personnel. I attended the recent commissioning of HMCS *Windsor* in Halifax, the submarine that will soon go on its first mission to the Bahamas. I was there to show my support for our men and women in service who will be putting themselves at risk. Our community is steadfastly behind them and supporting them, whether it be in correspondence, in goods or in having them come to our city if they cannot be with the submarine itself to view it themselves, so that quality of life is enhanced.

The pensionable improvement in the bill shows that we can as a country afford things that will instill confidence and provide some sense of security in our military personnel. That has been lacking. When we look at quality of life we define it in many different ways. It could be housing for example. We have heard a lot of discourse about the housing conditions for our men and women in the service and what they have to endure on the bases and that their involvement in terms of creating their own communities is often not ideal. They do not have the standard of living that we should be proud of as Canadians. We know we can do better but we have not. I believe we have been making the wrong choices on where to allocate our resources. That is a simple thing we can do to increase the quality of life of our service personnel living in those residences.

Pay is another issue, although when people enter the service their number one priority for entering is not necessarily the pay but that they want to serve their country and ensure that we have freedom and democracy, not only here but around the world. However the pay is something that is important because they have families and their families depend upon having earners who will provide the means so that they can make choices in the future. Whether it be a different education path, experiences, family vacations, personal growth, investments or opportunities, they need those aspects behind them. That certainly has not happened in the past 10 years in terms of the amount that they have been receiving. It certainly should be more and we have been supporting that.

The government has shown that it has not done a good job of providing the right infrastructure investments. We know for a fact that there are helicopters, ships, jeeps and planes that we have to look at in terms of the cost that we will have to pay to provide the right tools and resources.

I know we discussed the fact that we are not a superpower like the United States. I do not think Canadians are comparing themselves to that. They are asking for a government that will provide the adequate support, equipment and tools so that people can be trained, have

good morale and we can actually have an element of pride coming not only from the people serving but also from the citizens who are backing them.

That leadership has been lacking. We should not be looking at item after item and what is coming up. We should be showing some leadership, but I do not think that has happened.

We have made those choices. The former minister of finance decided to provide \$100 billion worth of tax cuts. We wonder where the money is coming from. We know where it went. We will need to make some very difficult decisions because we have lost those revenues and resources. I think the choices should have been different, and this is a good example.

The pension funds would provide people with some confidence and, I believe, convince youth to enlist and members of the forces to stay in the service because there will be amendments.

• (1650)

It is quite correctly noted that the improvement in pension benefits is driven to some extent by the desire not only to improve the quality of persons currently serving in the Canadian Forces but to assist in the recruitment of new personnel. I think that is important.

I have spoken a number of times about the challenges youth will face because of the lack of direction we have had over the last 10 years. Our youth are concerned about pensions. Many people who are currently employed have vulnerable pensions, such as the employees at Air Canada and other corporations where pensions have not been funded correctly.

We have another group of young Canadians, which goes directly to this issue, coming out of school a lot later in life and more in debt. Because they begin working later in life their pensionable earning years will be greatly reduced, which creates a challenging environment for them. They may not have a sustainable pension to retire early and live out their dreams. Like most Canadians, after working hard they want to retire with dignity. I believe it is important for the bill to provide more security because young people will be faced with this issue more and more.

It is quite a sleeper out there because we have not seen the first wave through, and we will. Over the next 20 years we will see a lot of vulnerable people who will not have the years needed for an appropriate pension. The bill would certainly be an improvement.

However the bill does raise a couple of questions about the pensions and the way they will be set up. It deals with how the government has handled the whole Canadian pension fund. We know for a fact that 30% of these funds can go overseas for investment. The other funds will be invested in Canada. The government will not agree to an ethics screen or a green screen on where those pensionable earnings go. Quite literally, we could have men and women, who have paid into the pension plan, go to places where they have either served against regimes or have seen terrible situations with human rights issues. We do not know, because they only have to report back once every two years to the Minister of Finance himself. I do not believe that is an acceptable situation.

We need to show confidence. According to the new section 25(4) of the act as amended by clause 15, it states that if a contributor with two or more years of pensionable service dies, the survivor and children will receive the annual allowances. After 10 years or more of pensionable service, individuals released from the military for health reasons because they are no longer able to perform their duties would be entitled to an immediate pension.

I congratulate the government and all members of the House who support this because this builds confidence.

We can do things that make sense and that give confidence. At the same time we have to battle it out, like the VI program for veterans' widows who do not get the support they need to keep them in their homes. It is actually a saving to the whole system but the government cannot find the funds to do that. We have a bill here where we can find the funds, which is a good thing, but why can we not find the funds for other things?

I will conclude by saying that this is a small positive step forward. I will not get into all the other different things on which we have wasted our money. If governments make the right decisions and invest in people, instead of tax cuts, we can build a nation that will be much better off in the future.

• (1655)

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this has been a fairly broad ranging debate today. The member talked about investing in people. I have been concerned about the way the military itself has dealt with the reserves and the cadets. Both of those are very much people organizations of the military in terms of pension type support and other support.

Would my colleague care to comment on the role of the reserves and the cadets and, in particular, how they are treated by the military hierarchy?

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague's question relates to an individual employed in my office, Mr. Andrew Sadler, who is part of that whole situation between reserves and cadets. He has done a great job of adding that component to his life, and that expertise has helped the service of my office by far. This individual has had the opportunity to participate, to make choices and to build friendships, not only in the place where he lived but in our local constituency.

I believe the reserves and cadets deserve proper respect and encouragement that can build the nation. For young individuals to be involved in an organization from the grassroots all the way to the top

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is very important. It builds a long established relationship of protocol and an understanding of history.

As a former city councillor the one thing I have seen is that our municipal services lost a number of very experienced individuals who retired early because of cuts and downloading. We lost their mentorship and a world of knowledge.

Where I believe we can be really effective in terms of having not only highly trained professionals but a competent and very informed group of people in the reserves and cadets is by providing them with better opportunities so we can prosper as a nation. I think they would add a lot more to the nation if they were given the opportunities.

• (1700)

The Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

* * *

[*Translation*]

STATISTICS ACT

Hon. Elinor Caplan (for the Minister of Industry) moved: that Bill S-13, an act to amend the Statistics Act be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Serge Marzil (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to present Bill S-13, an act to amend the Statistics Act, for second reading today.

Bill S-13 is of interest to many of our constituents. Historical census records are a key tool for historical researchers and genealogists and remain the most commonly used records in family and historical research. There has been much debate over the last few years about access to the post-1901 historical census records. I am sure that you have all received correspondence or seen media articles on this matter.

Bill S-13 provides reasonable access to historical census records and meets the needs of genealogists and historians for information on their families and communities. The bill also puts appropriate safeguards in place to protect the privacy of individuals. Bill S-13 achieves an acceptable balance of these two competing public goods. I am pleased that a solution has been found to the difficult problem of balancing access to our historical census records with protecting the privacy of Canadians.

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The underlying problem regarding historical census records is that there has been legal ambiguity about the confidential status of historical census records. As such, Bill S-13 is designed to remove the legal ambiguity that currently exists with post-1901 census records.

First of all, I would like to explain to the House why this legislation does not cover the 1906 census records. The government released the 1906 census without restriction on January 24, 2003. The 1906 census records were released without condition given the special nature of that census. Only tombstone information was collected and the 1906 census was limited to three provinces—Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. Unlike the 1906 census, the 1911 and subsequent censuses contain very sensitive information.

The purpose of Bill S-13 is to make the 1911 and later census records available for historical and genealogical research.

The bill would allow historians and genealogists to have access to historical census records, under certain conditions, beginning 92 years after the census took place. The census records would become available without restriction after 112 years.

The bill also seeks to clarify the position with respect to future census records by asking respondents to consent to the eventual release of their information. The bill contains a provision to allow Canadians, beginning with the 2006 census, to consent to the eventual public release of their personal census information, 92 years later. Some of you may question why there are conditions attached to the release of these historical census records, while others may say that these records should be permanently closed to protect the privacy of Canadians.

Bill S-13 is a compromise. As in any compromise, there has been give and take. Bill S-13 represents ground given on the access side and ground given on the protection side by both the Chief Statistician of Canada and the National Archivist.

On the protection side, informed consent by Canadians will govern the release of future censuses starting with the 2006 census. On the release side, it is unrestricted access after 112 years for censuses taken between 1911 and 2001.

• (1705)

Bill S-13 provides genealogists and historical researchers with access for genealogical, scholarly, cultural or educational purposes beginning 92 years after the census took place. After 112 years, the records will be fully released. While this legislation puts conditions on release of information for twenty years, it is important to have such safeguards in place to protect the privacy of Canadians. In fact, this legislation goes beyond the Privacy Act and provides an additional 20 years of privacy protection.

One of the most important sections in Bill S-13 is its provision for Canadians to give informed consent to the release of their census information in the future. Starting with the 2006 census, Canadians will be asked to decide if they will allow their personal census information to be released publically after 92 years. Individual census records would be released only where consent is given. To allow Canadians to decide in future censuses whether others can have access to their personal census records is in keeping with the highest standards of privacy protection. This is the heart of the

compromise as it will ensure the willing cooperation of Canadians with future censuses which is so essential for a successful census. This continued trust by Canadians is a cornerstone of Statistics Canada.

I think it is fair to say that the bill meets the needs of historians and genealogists while protecting the privacy of Canadians.

In summary, the bill will permit access to the 1911 to 2001 census records, 92 years after a census was taken. Access will be subject to specific conditions.

Genealogists, professional or amateur, or their authorized representatives would agree in advance that they would release only tombstone information pertaining to their own family members. Subject to this release condition, access for genealogical purposes would be unrestricted. Tombstone information is defined as name, address, age, sex, marital status, origin and occupation.

Historical researchers would have the public and scientific nature of their proposed research confirmed by appropriate peers or community leaders prior to starting their work. Again, while access would be unrestricted, only tombstone information could be released.

The conditions would be in effect for a 20-year period following the release of the historical census records 92 years after the census. After 112 years, the conditions would be removed, and access and release would be permitted.

The bill will allow Canadians to decide, starting with the 2006 census, whether they allow their personal census information to be made publically available 92 years after the census. Starting with 2098, access to 2006 census records would be made publically available only when consent has been given at the time of collection.

Access to census records as specified in the legislation would be achieved by using existing access mechanisms of the Library and Archives of Canada, formerly known as the National Archives. These conditions are neither onerous nor restrictive for genealogists and historians.

I would also like to assure the House that the legislative change in the Statistics Act does not impact on any of Statistic Canada's other surveys. The census is the only survey where identifiable personal records are microfilmed or scanned and kept in perpetuity.

In closing, I want to say that this bill is a reasonable compromise. As I mentioned at the start of my speech, this bill is a solution to the difficult problems of balancing access to our historical census records with protecting the privacy of Canadians. This bill fully ensures the integrity of census-keeping in Canada.

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•(1710)

It will ensure the public's continued cooperation with and trust in Statistics Canada with regard to its censuses and other surveys.

I ask the House to support this bill.

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as correctly identified, Bill S-13 attempts to strike a balance between access to data and confidentiality. Well noted in the details was the concept of enlightened consent for 2006.

I was the chair of the complete count committee for Windsor and Essex County for the 2000 census. It was critical to get reliable data because as a country we make a lot of decisions about where we spend money and resources on census data. It was important that the data was very thorough, was very strong and was as good as it possibly could be. To do that, we had to build up public confidence. We had to go door to door, as one of six places in Ontario, to ensure that confidence, especially when we were dealing with multicultural communities where people who had come from abroad were being counted for the first time not only in numbers but also in very personal and sensitive information. Canadians in general are very concerned about privacy matters, whether they be in the government itself or outside in the private sector.

My concern is about the way the government has handled the next stage of Canada's census by outsourcing it to Lockheed Martin. I believe it would create a real crisis for Canadians to give information about themselves, their families and their lifestyles to a multinational arms manufacturing company that could quite literally have been responsible, if they had come from another country, for damaging their property, injuring them or killing a neighbour or a family friend with products that the company actually sells abroad to a number of different nations.

My concern is that we would witness a slow erosion of the confidence. To instill that confidence again, will we cancel that contract that is due in 2004 by Lockheed Martin and do it in house? It is not acceptable to say that we have no control over this because of NAFTA and the fact that it is an American multinational corporation that is an arms manufacturer and can bid just like anybody else. It does not have to do that because we can do it in house as we have done before.

Will the parliamentary secretary work with me to ensure that Canadians are doing this job and that it is in house so we can restore the confidence in our census data?

•(1715)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Marcil: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Windsor West for his question.

Today we are debating a bill for the purpose of correcting a situation. Historians and genealogists will be given access to information for their family or others in order to put together material to show Canadians, or anyone else, 92 years later, the origins of people who were born or living in Canada with consent from the person participating in the census.

If Canadians mistrust Statistics Canada or the company that might be conducting the census, they could simply sign a document indicating that they do not want this personal information to be disclosed until 112 years later.

Let us not confuse the bill as it stands today, Bill S-13, with the contract that has been awarded. Let us be clear that contracts awarded by the government are tendered. A statement of work is drafted and standards are followed. There are also well-disclosed selection criteria. It is open to everyone.

Our legislation requires us, in North America and under NAFTA, to open our market to everyone. Calls for tenders cannot be limited strictly to Canadian or local firms. We are required to open our market.

Signing an international agreement means that one agrees to respect the document and the conditions agreed to. In this case, I trust the Government of Canada. Calls for tenders have been made; that is one thing.

Today, what worries us specifically is the high number of citizens, genealogists and historians who have phoned me and whom I have met with in my office. I am sure that all parliamentarians have met with people in their office who asked, "Why are we denied access to the famous 1901 census and the censuses for subsequent years?"

At the time, disclosure standards were probably shorter to protect the privacy of Canadians. Now, we want to give historians and genealogists access to all the censuses, while ensuring that privacy is protected.

We are telling people that nothing can be released before 112 years. To have information released after 92 years, consent will be required. It will be possible for individuals to consent to the release of tombstone information, such as name, sex, origin, occupation, after 92 years.

This is the sole focus of the bill, which is redressing a certain inequity. Historians sometimes retrace the history of a region or village. Every year, there are villages celebrating their 125th, 150th or 200th anniversary, and we want to know who built these villages. Often, a local historian wants to find out who the founding families were, among other things.

In order to retrace the history of a region, province, country or family, access to certain information is necessary. We are fortunate enough to have an organization by the name of Statistics Canada, which carries out censuses on a regular basis, so that the information is always up to date. Through this organization, historians and those interested in history can have access to such information.

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This is important, and this bill gives all these specialists access to this information while at the same time protecting the privacy of Canadians.

• (1720)

[*English*]

Mr. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry for an excellent speech on Bill S-13.

I want to state what the feedback has been from my constituents. I remember the first person was from the Porter Creek part of Whitehorse and was against the bill. That person was worried about privacy. All subsequent submissions since then have been in favour. The ones I remember were trying to research their family history. They have no way of doing that as early as would be required without the bill. It gives protection for 92 or 112 years, depending upon the situation.

Is the parliamentary secretary confident that the bill protects the privacy of the first person I was talking about for sufficient time, but also allows people to do research on their family history?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Marcil: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for Yukon for his question.

It is important that members of Parliament can ask questions in order to clarify a bill. Few people, in fact, even members of the public, read a bill or an act clause by clause. Instead we rely on experts, lawyers and other people. At least, here in the House, questions from the hon. members give the minister or the parliamentary secretary an opportunity for further explanation.

Bill S-13 does, in fact, protect private information. If a person does not want private information released, as of the 2006 census, that person need only sign a form stating that this information is private and cannot be released until 112 years have passed. We will certainly not be here in 112 years to debate this act again.

[*English*]

Mr. Grant McNally (Dewdney—Alouette, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to speak to Bill S-13. This bill has been a long time coming. Members of the Canadian Alliance have answered hundreds of letters and have received many petitions concerning the release of census data over the last three years.

My colleague, the member for Edmonton Southwest, is the official opposition critic for census records and his offices receive letters almost daily on this issue since it left the Senate. I would like to pay tribute to the hard work of my colleague from Edmonton Southwest on this issue, as well as my colleagues from Calgary Southeast and Peace River who have also had a great deal of input and hard work on this bill and on this issue as well.

The Canadian Alliance voted unanimously in favour of the motion by the member for Calgary Southeast which stated:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should take all necessary steps to release the 1911 census records once they have been deposited in the National Archives in 2003.

The member for Peace River shepherded this issue through our caucus when it first came up in 2001.

As we all know, census records are an invaluable source of information for those conducting historical or genealogical research. In fact, the 1906 census, the document which gave rise to this bill, was a special census that was conducted only in the prairie provinces after the massive influx of immigrants at the turn of the century. The release of the 1906 census generated more than four million hits in the first 12 days it was online. The same story holds true for the 1901 census, which received more than 50 million hits for its first six months online.

The problem, as I understand it, is the nature of the census data or one of the issues that we are bringing forward. Statistics Canada strives to protect the integrity of the information it gathers. In Canada we have kept census information secret for a long period of time after the data is initially collected. We have kept census information secret for 92 years on average. That is 28 years longer than in the United States and eight years shorter than in the United Kingdom. In my opinion, 92 years is a reasonable period of time to keep information under wraps, so to speak.

At the turn of the century some ambiguities were raised as to how long such information should be kept from public release. According to Statistics Canada, census takers were given conflicting instructions on how to collect census data. It may have led some Canadians to believe that their information would be kept secret forever. Obviously that is not the case.

This situation was clarified when confidentiality and disclosure regulations that had existed for previous census operations were enforced by law for the 1911 census. The Canadian commissioner of privacy and a legal opinion received by Statistics Canada have led some groups to push that census records be kept secret for 20 years longer, a total of 112 years, due to the provision in Canadian law to keep personal records secret until 20 years after the death of an individual.

Bill S-13 attempts to reach a compromise between concerns for privacy and the covenant agreed to by Statistics Canada and the Canadian public through the census. It was originally proposed that this bill be passed in a single sitting. The Canadian Alliance, the official opposition, could not agree to such a course of action for three reasons that I will now touch on.

First, we are seeking clarity concerning the conditional release of information. Second, we would like to discuss the creation of a new bureaucracy and new regulations to police the conditional release of information. Third and finally, I want to debate the appropriate passage of time before census information should be released to the public.

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As I understand it, the only information that will be released after 92 years is what is often referred to as tombstone information, basic information: name, address, age, date of birth, marital status, sex and occupation. At the turn of the century this scope of information comprised the bulk of the census. However some interesting questions have been asked over the years, ranging from the mental state of members of one's family to the type of private company one keeps, questions that understandably Statistics Canada would like to treat gently and that Canadians have concerns about in terms of the privacy issues.

• (1725)

One has to wonder if the questions that need to be treated differently need to be asked at all. That is a point of debate as well. Nevertheless, the Alliance is hoping to clarify why there would only be a partial release of information, especially since researchers would be required to fill out an application in order to access this information.

That brings me to my second point. The lion's share of this bill deals with section 17 of the Statistics Act which governs secrecy. As I understand it, the information released after 92 years would be reviewed by those who fill out an application to view the records. There would be two separate sets of researchers allowed to access census records after 92 years, genealogists and historians.

Genealogists would be required to fill out a very simple form and their qualifications, to the best of my knowledge, would not be reviewed. Historians, however, would have to be vouched for. According to the draft regulations proposed to cabinet, persons applying to conduct historical research would be required to submit an application on their own behalf accompanied by a form from a list of people who have "assessed the public and scientific value of the research". The people who can approve historical research are presidents or faculty deans of universities, senior elected community officials such as a mayor or a reeve, president of an ethnic or cultural association, a member of Parliament, a senator, a member of the provincial legislature, senior clergy, a native chief, a chief librarian, provincial archivist, the national archivist of Canada and the chief statistician of Canada. Clearly, this list of people who can approve access to census information should be included in the bill.

Taking a member of Parliament as an example, many people may ask about our qualifications in assessing the public and scientific value of proposed research. Members of Parliament are busy, as are their staff members. In addition to being seen as unqualified by some in this regard, it could take us a long time to respond to requests from historical researchers which may affect their research.

Further to the release of information, there is a section of the bill which states that with the 2006 census, those people filling out the census would have to give their consent at the time they fill out the census forms for the information to be disclosed after 112 years. This section is a bit puzzling. It is the subject about which our critic's office has received the most amount of mail, with concerns about this particular aspect of the bill.

Will there be a campaign to educate people about this clause? Is it a one time offer? Can a person go back and change his or her decision? Who is allowed to check the consent box for children? How many people does the government expect may opt out of a

public release? If more than 50% of Canadians choose to keep their census records secret until the end of the time period, how would that skew the other 49% of records that are released? How much would it cost Canadians to administer and keep these records secret? These are all questions that need to be answered. They are not clearly laid out in the bill in its current state.

Finally, we wonder why we need to create a new bureaucracy to police this endeavour of trying to obtain access to census information. A form is being created for those who wish to conduct research on census information. As I have outlined, that could create a whole new level of bureaucracy.

Reading the speech from Liberal Senator Lorna Milne, the champion of the bill, she states, "The government does not want to make it difficult to conduct historical and genealogical research". If that were the case, the government would not be imposing new and complicated procedures in order to access census information. It is my experience that regulations and forms make things more difficult, not easier.

As the opposition, we therefore must ask, has the government conducted a cost benefit analysis on these new regulations? Does the government have any idea how many people would be applying to review these records? How is the government going to police the use of these records? Will there be fines or jail time for those who misuse their privileges?

• (1730)

The Canadian Alliance will be proposing amendments to this bill. Many of them will focus on the questions that have been raised in my speech today and which have been championed by my colleague from Edmonton.

One of the most important questions facing the House is how much time is appropriate to respect the privacy rights of those who have completed census forms. Today the average life expectancy of Canadian males is 75 years and of females is 81 years. In all likelihood our personal information will not be made available until long after we are gone.

The Canadian Alliance believes that 92 years of secrecy is sufficient to protect the integrity of census records. At the same time, we do not belittle the privacy concerns of Canadians and the Privacy Commissioner on the subject. In fact the Canadian Alliance is very concerned about the breadth and scope of the current census forms. Many of us know people who have heard from constituents who feel the long form of the census asks for too much personal information.

Statistics Canada is the depository of highly sensitive and private information of private citizens and corporations. Many individuals and corporations believe that Statistics Canada collects too much information these days and then, because of the sheer volume of information, is delayed in releasing analysis in a timely manner, but that is a debate for another day.

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I want to close my comments by thanking members for the opportunity to discuss these issues. I realize it has taken a long time to create this bill. Many consultations have taken place. I cannot support this bill in its current form unless it is amended and many of the questions that I have addressed and the official opposition has addressed are answered in the process.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the hon. member's remarks. Yes, this question has come up in every riding office because we have historical and genealogy societies which, in the past, have lobbied repeatedly to get us to authorize the release of such data.

With respect to the time periods used in other countries, one example is the United States, where participation is mandatory and release permitted after 72 years. That is the number of years the files remain confidential before being made public. In the United Kingdom, it is the same thing, but the period is 100 years. In Australia it is 99 years. In France they are talking about 100 years. In Canada the proposal is for 92 years for the censuses previous to those mentioned in the bill.

Considering the whole concept of protection of confidential information, is it not true that the time periods established by this bill correspond to those found in many other places and would be sufficient protection for personal information?

I believe my hon. colleague said that he and his party could not support this bill. Is he aware that, with a decision like that, if the House were to reject the bill, we would be in a situation where, for many years yet, historical researchers and genealogists would be deprived of important sources of information? And yet the bill before us today appears to meet the minimum conditions necessary for protection of confidential information in our society.

• (1735)

[*English*]

Mr. Grant McNally: Mr. Speaker, obviously my colleague has spent a great deal of time on this issue. He has had a number of constituents with concerns, as we all have. They have come to us wanting access to information for a number of different reasons. This bill lays out much of that information.

My colleague's question is mainly focused on the time aspect. We believe 92 years is an appropriate amount of time. I believe 112 years is being outlined in the current bill. There seems to be a balance between privacy and the release of information.

At the same time, one of the bigger concerns is the two-pronged approach to access to the records for someone looking at census data for genealogical purposes versus someone looking at the information for historical research. There is a dual track system that is going to limit historians' access to the information in that they will have to fill out more forms, which may include taking up more of our time as members of Parliament, as outlined in my speech.

I do think that 92 years is an appropriate period of time that should be in place for the release of all the information. There should not be the 92 year and 112 year time periods in the bill. It should be 92 years for the release of that information.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one of the interesting aspects of the bill is that it is correcting a mistake. It corrects an oversight which did not quite align to what we have right now. That is why we have a number of different changes with Bill S-13 which will clarify what could have been done before.

One of the comments of the member is a concern that I have heard from other people that too much information is being gathered in new census data. This goes back to an important issue which is the confidentiality and the reliability of the data.

How does the member feel about Lockheed Martin winning the contract for future census gathering? The bill does talk about that. There is enlightened consent for the new data. We could be setting ourselves up for another problem that the bill is correcting right now. My concern is that is what the contract is going to do and this bill crosses over into that.

This is going to provide some good improvements. We have heard some great arguments that deal with the sensitivity about privacy and also what historians and genealogists need to do. At the same time, the government's actions by not insourcing to Statistics Canada and putting it out to private tender to Lockheed Martin is going to potentially repeat a problem and cause us some great concern.

Mr. Grant McNally: Mr. Speaker, my colleague raises a grave issue, one which he has raised in the House before. It is one that has been asked during question period a number of times and one that has not been answered by the government. We do not know why that is, or we do know why and part of the reason is that it is called question period, not answer period. It is a rare day when we actually get an answer to that kind of question. It would be a good question to further probe the government on that contract.

The first point my colleague mentioned was the information that is gathered and the sensitivity of that information. Canadians do have concerns about the sensitivity of information that is gathered through the census by Statistics Canada. One of the questions that comes up is should one give consent now for information to be released, how does that impact changes in questions that are asked at a later date?

As I mentioned in my speech, is that a one time thing? What if the forms change and people are not comfortable with releasing the information gathered later on down the road? These are questions that have been left floating out there that we cannot quite put our finger on because they have not been outlined or answered by the government at this point. Hopefully we will get to those issues during this debate and also in further examination of the bill. We will be putting forward some amendments to address those questions.

My colleague asked a good question. I would like to hear what the government has to say. I wish it would actually answer that rather than skate around it.

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• (1740)

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened very carefully to what my colleague had to say. I also listened carefully to his second last answer.

This debate is the culmination of a very remarkable campaign across the country for change in the way census information is released. People who were involved professionally, people in the public service, professional historians and others, came to us and explained this complicated matter that there had been a rule that information was not being released and that it should be. That was followed by this remarkable grassroots campaign from genealogists.

Genealogists is a fancy term but it includes most of us some of the time, people who have a great interest in their own family's history or their region's history. I presented petitions. I met with people in my riding. To give some idea, at the farmer's market people would stop me and ask what progress was being made with the release of these census facts.

I listened very carefully to my colleague opposite but I still do not understand what he and his party propose to do. If they could change this, what would they do for the genealogists and professional historians who play such an important role in nurturing the culture of our nation? Would he care to comment on that? What is he going to do for these genealogists?

Mr. Grant McNally: Mr. Speaker, my colleague brings up some good questions. He has been involved in this issue and has some expertise in this area.

One of the questions that we have on this side of the House is, why is there a two-prong approach to access the information? Genealogists are filling out a simple form and historians must go through a more rigorous process to have access to that very same information. That is one of the concerns that we have.

One of the other main concerns is the time limit on the release of the information. My understanding is that there are two time periods: 92 years and 112 years, both within the same bill. Why is there that particular discrepancy? The Alliance believes that 92 years would safeguard information for people and be appropriate. That would be my response to my colleague.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak on this bill entitled an act to amend the Statistics Act.

For many years, historical societies, genealogists and students, conducting various types of research, have been saying that they are facing a huge obstacle, because previous legislation failed to limit how long census information would be kept confidential.

Much time has been needed to analyze and study this issue. Now a bill is before the House. Our society is greatly concerned with the protection of privacy. This reaction is quite understandable.

On one hand, archivists, historians, genealogists and others are interested in historical research and data collected by Statistics Canada. The National Statistics Council and the Privacy Commissioner are among those who initially opposed the release of such information.

As legislators, we need to balance both sides to ensure that this bill does indeed provide sufficient protection of personal information and also allow historians and archivists to do their jobs adequately.

In Canada, there is a long established practice which states that:

All individual census records, up to and including those from the 1901 Census, have been transferred from Statistics Canada to the National Archives and made available for public use. The data for the 1891 and the 1901 Censuses were transferred and released 92 years after their collection.

Hence the minimum waiting period established for the use of information. However, as I mentioned earlier, those using this type of information disagree.

The minister appointed a committee of experts to consider such issues. I want to mention, for example, this committee on which Mr. Justice La Forest, former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada, sat. He carefully considered the various opinions expressed. He concluded that this guarantee of confidentiality was not intended to last indefinitely. He stated:

Our view is that the passage of 92 years is sufficient time to allay concerns regarding individual privacy.

Consequently, the committee addressed this issue and had to assess how to strike a balance between protecting personal information and disclosing information for the purposes of studying history and the past, in order to ensure that our culture in Quebec and Canada would be known in the future under acceptable conditions.

I remember representations, in particular by Jeannine Ouellette, who was very active in the Société d'histoire et de généalogie de Rivière-du-Loup and by people from the Société d'histoire de la Côte-sud. Ms. Ouellette was also heavily involved in a Quebec-wide coalition of genealogical and historical societies.

These representations were made on many occasions to show us that it is not a question of allowing the wholesale use of personal information or of creating a precedent for the future, which would be dangerous, but of having proper guidelines. We believe that is what Bill S-13 provides.

The committee that studied this issue said it was convinced that legislators had probably not wished or intended to provide an indefinite guarantee of confidentiality. Nonetheless, conservation and release dates had been omitted, not because there was opposition to them, but because with the scientific knowledge at the time, the need for such a measure had not been anticipated.

In any event, no law is forever. There is always room to reconsider legislation in the light of reality as it evolves. That is what we are doing today with Bill S-13.

• (1745)

The committee reported, and I quote:

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We have reviewed legal opinions provided to Statistics Canada and to the National Archives by the Department of Justice and we recognize that legal minds can differ regarding the legal standing of various assurances given respondents versus the indication that records were to be transferred to the Archives. However, while we find the legal situation ambiguous, we find no convincing evidence that Parliament intended to create perpetual confidentiality.

We have come to the view that the release of pre-1906 census records constitutes a particularly important precedent particularly when combined with the fact that release of the 1891 and 1901 census records occurred in concert with the 1983 Privacy Act. We further believe that the passage of time—92 years in this case—is an important legal and moral consideration and that the release of census records after 92 years in no way violates the original intent of those who developed the census in Canada. We do recognize that the passage of the Statistics Act in 1918, with its encoded guarantees of confidentiality, adds an element of uncertainty as does the disappearance, after 1946, of the requirement that census records be transferred to the National Archives but this does not change our view of the spirit and intent.

On the basis of this analysis and the information provided in it, the 92-year period referred to is the timeframe applicable, when consent has been provided to use the information, to some of the information that can be used for research purposes. For any information concerning a person, it is 112 years. If consent is refused—one may not want the information to be used—the information is then protected forever. No problem there.

Let us come back to the 92-year period. I think that, in this kind of situation, it is important to see how other countries are doing. In most countries where historical census records are released, personal and confidential information is protected for a period of 70 to 100 years, after which the records enter into the public domain.

In Canada, this period of confidentiality varied before enactment of the Privacy Act. Now, however, it sets the period at 92 years. In other countries, such as the U.S., participation in the census is mandatory. There is provision for release after 72 years. The period in the U.K. is 100 years, Australia 99 years, and France 100 years, but a partial release for only a few cantons. This is a peculiarity of the French census. In Canada, as I said, the period is 92 years. It is a bit hard to explain how they came up with that figure, but it seems to have been the time lapse that would have allowed immediate release of the 1891 census data when the legislation was passed in 1983. This strikes us as a worthwhile timeframe.

For all these reasons, the Bloc Québécois is in favour of the principle behind Bill S-13, because we feel it respects the right to privacy. It demonstrates great respect for those concerned. There is no question of allowing the release of information. The timeframes are set. Given people's life spans and the protection afforded, we feel that this strikes the necessary balance between protecting people's privacy and research requirements.

In concrete terms, Bill S-13 amends the Statistics Act. It was initiated in the Senate, then referred to a Senate committee, and now this is its first time to be debated in the House. We have now reached second reading. It has, however, likely been discussed in all MPs' offices already. Historical and genealogical societies have come to us on numerous occasions to set out what they wanted for the genealogists, who often do research on a volunteer basis. All they need, therefore, is information with which to put together a history of a family or a village. This is the kind of data they need.

For these reasons, we believe that this bill offers a satisfactory way of proceeding. It amends the Statistics Act and attempts to dissipate the legal ambiguity surrounding viewing of census returns from

1910 to 2003. Because of the existing legislation, it was not very clear that such data really could be released. There have been court cases; but as legislators, we now have an opportunity to settle the issue.

● (1750)

The bill would enable genealogists and historical researchers to consult census returns under certain conditions, for a period of 20 years beginning 92 years after the census. Thus, 92 years after the census, research can begin, under certain specific conditions for a period of 20 years. All restrictions regarding examination of the returns will be lifted 112 years after the date of the census. This period is long enough. Considering the life expectancy of the people covered by a census, it is quite certain that all those individuals will have died by that time. Thus, we will avoid situations where releasing information could create complications.

If we look at the bill in more detail, we see that the new section 17 (4) permits a person wishing to conduct genealogical or historical research, who has obtained written approval—it is good that this is specified—to examine census data.

The bill states that section 17 is amended by adding the following:

(5) In deciding whether to approve a historical research project, a person must assess the public and scientific value of the research.

Thus, it cannot be just anyone doing anything at all. There are approvals to obtain; requests must be serious. There is no question of authorizing frivolous proposals.

Conditions governing the use and disclosure of census data apply if a person wishes to obtain authorization for genealogical or historical research. Persons wishing such to examine such records must sign and comply with an undertaking in prescribed form. Anyone who might behave in such a way as to not be in compliance with the law would have to face the consequences, having made a commitment to respect the conditions set out.

In fact, anyone not respecting his or her undertaking is guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding \$1,000. This will avoid frivolous searches and will ensure the very serious nature of any studies carried out.

At any rate, historical and genealogical societies throughout Quebec and Canada are very well known for the serious nature of what they do and the quality of the research they produce. They enable us to become familiar with a slice of history that would not otherwise have been known. Often discoveries are made on how certain issues have evolved, ones with real significance for the present and the future. This can stop us from having to reinvent the wheel, among other things.

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It is also important to note that subclause 17(7) indicates that, starting one hundred and twelve years after the census is taken, the information may be examined by anyone. At that time, the time limit will be up and all information available may be consulted.

As well, under 17(8), the information contained in the returns of any census of population taken in 2006 or later may, starting ninety-two years after the census is taken, be examined by anyone if the person to whom the information relates had given their consent to disclosure of that information. For censuses after 2006, or in other words the next Canada census, consent must definitely be given if the data is to be made available after 92 years. If consent to disclose personal information is not given by the person concerned, the information will never be made public.

This bill remedies some situations that were unclear in the past, as well as clarifying the situation for the future, which is a good thing. It is a response to the wishes of those who want to see personal information protected when the person concerned has not authorized disclosure. On the other hand, when authorization has been given, there will be appropriate time frames which will make it possible to carry out appropriate research.

New subsection 17(10) states that the returns of each census conducted between 1910 and 2003 or effective 2006 shall, 92 years after the census is taken, be transferred to the National Archives of Canada in order to permit their examination in a single location.

• (1755)

In light of the information I have provided, the Bloc Québécois finds that Bill S-13 allows important historical information to be studied after an acceptable statutory timeframe. Consequently, in principle, we are in favour of Bill S-13.

It will also help to extend Quebec's common history. Access for archivists and historians, after a period of 92 years, will allow the production of better historical documents that enrich the cultural heritage of Quebec and Canada. Often, one must refer to the interpretation of a period of our history, of our past. With clear rules, a historian will be able to look for the most accurate information possible. There are always political debates on questions of interpretation, but the facts will be there and the public will be able to make a clear decision for itself.

Many experts maintain that census documents are essential to historical and genealogical research. I think they are right. But where do we draw the line between privacy and the need for historical knowledge? The Bloc Québécois feels that while the right to privacy has to be respected, census information should not be subject to perpetual confidentiality. We would be denying ourselves essential information. For a few years now, historical and genealogical societies have taken all sorts of initiatives that have led to this bill, while ensuring the protection of personal information. This bill will allow both objectives to be met.

With the passage of time, respondents' concerns about protecting their privacy will diminish. Obviously some information can create problems for the living. But once people have passed away and the next generation is in place, there would no longer be a problem because of the timeframe set out in the bill. After an appropriate

period of time, the public's right to access census files overrides respondents' rights to privacy, if indeed this timeframe is protected.

Given that the data are not harmful to those still living and that releasing such data cannot harm them, we feel that historical and scientific repercussions are more important than protecting the privacy of the dead. Some people would argue that Canadians were assured that their privacy would be protected. The threat of harm to persons still living is very slim. The data could be released after 92 years or more often after 112 years. Beginning with the 2006 Census, personal information could be protected forever if people so choose.

The Bloc Québécois does not believe that the dead do not have the right to privacy protection, but the terms in the bill will ensure a reasonable statute of limitations, as recommended by a committee of experts including Mr. Justice La Forest.

Most of the data collected during a census are not confidential and those that are, such as income, can lose some of their confidential nature over time.

Despite the guarantees of confidentiality made to the respondents, there was an intent to preserve data collected for future generations, even back then. A good indication of this is the provision that data would be sent to the National Archives of Canada, as set out in the current legislation. The Archives is an organization that has always had the mandate to preserve data for future reference.

We are aware that some people will have concerns about privacy protection. However, this will dissipate over time. This bill, after numerous attempts, will ensure that the goal is reached and that these data will be preserved for historical purposes, as historical societies and genealogical groups have long sought, while ensuring sufficient protection of privacy.

For these reasons, the Bloc Québécois will vote in favour of this bill.

• (1800)

[English]

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed what my colleague had to say. I know that he has followed this matter very closely. As he points out, the two time periods, the 92 years and the 112 years, are one of the compromises that has been developed during the debates on this issue, the public debate and the debate in the Senate and here in the House.

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My colleague heard a previous speaker from another party make the point that he was concerned about it and his party was concerned about it because it creates more paperwork. That is the way he put it. I had thought about that matter. No one wants to create unnecessary paperwork, but it seems to me that in this case the paperwork only has to do with the 92 years. That is the time when societies, professional historians and very sophisticated genealogists are addressing the matter. It is at that point that they will have to fill in some forms or sign documents and so on in order to have early access to this important information.

When it gets to the general public, the rest of us, at the 112 years, there will be no documentation. As I see it, the material will then be available and we can go forward and collect it at that time. I, like the member, think it is a good compromise and I would just like his comments on that. From the point of view of paperwork, I hope it will be minimal but appropriate paperwork and I hope that the paperwork is focused at the level where it is professionals or societies or others who have to complete the forms.

● (1805)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question.

This question was raised previously and it is a legitimate one. One can indeed wonder if legislation put forward and the approach taken will increase the paperwork significantly, resulting in a situation where there will be huge extra costs.

Often, government bills seem to have been prepared in a mad rush. We have seen this in the past, in particular with regard to terrorism, where they had to come back three times with the same bill. In this case, I think the bill has been put through a fine-tooth comb, it has been reviewed by people who are really looking for a balance. I think that the modern computer tools available will help ensure a follow up and appropriate management without necessarily resulting in a huge amount of paperwork, which stifles the administration of the act.

I want to reiterate that the question raised by my hon. colleague is a very appropriate one. For instance, under the bill establishing the gun registry, which in itself is a good thing, the system that was put in place is so cumbersome that it puts into question the very basis for the Firearms Act. This is definitely not a model to use for other legislation.

It seems to me that, in this bill, a balance was maintained. In its application, we will see whether the information can be processed without creating too much paperwork. Since, after 112 years, the information may be disclosed to anyone, there will be very little paperwork, because everyone will have access to the information.

For use during the period between 92 and 112 years, it is right to ask historical societies, historians, genealogists and anyone who requests access to the information to provide the reasons for their research, if only because, after 92 years, the census records may contain information on individuals who are still alive.

Thus, we must make sure that there are no frivolous data, and that no one is going to look for data that could be used improperly, for

example, to ridicule a segment of the population. Requests will have to be properly justified.

Bureaucratic control will be needed to ensure the balance described in the bill. I dare to hope that the people who will be managing the data in the future will do so with sufficient common sense. I am confident that we have established the minimum acceptable conditions.

One thing of which I am certain is that the members of genealogical and historical associations in every riding that we represent will be very pleased to see this bill passed so that the information can be utilized. In villages where a centennial or sesquicentennial is being celebrated, the people will thank them for access to the data.

We are talking about the census and about writing the history of the last century. It is important to clarify these positions. At the same time, this is a bill for the long term. It appears that there has been enough consideration, and we would hope that the government would have the same kind of attitude to various other bills, on which it does not appear to be taking the same approach, that is, consulting widely enough before passing laws.

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member gave an opinion as to whether or not he felt that the bill had hit its mark in terms of protecting confidentiality or privacy, giving us a solution to this long-standing debate and impasse.

I understood that there was an undertaking that the information would never be released by those who participated in the census. I understand that the bill is now calling on those who have the legitimate reasons of genealogy or historical work to sign an undertaking, which would be developed as part of the regulations. I can only assume that the undertaking would say something to the effect that any information that would come to their attention but was not directly related to the purposes of genealogy or historical work would not be disclosed.

I wonder if the member could clarify that for me, because it still does not explain how we would deal with the undertaking that was made in the first instance, that being that information would never be disclosed.

● (1810)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question.

I will not repeat the entire paragraph I quoted in answer. The government's committee of experts, one of whom was Mr. Justice La Forest, former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada, found overall that, despite the comments made in the past and despite the identified objectives in bills relating to the need for absolute and almost eternal protection of such data overall, various bills presented opposing views. I will quote an example from the committee's report.

We have come to the view that the release of pre-1906 census records constitutes a particularly important precedent particularly when combined with the fact that release of the 1891 and 1901 census records occurred in concert with the 1983 Privacy Act.

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So, jurisprudence and legislation in this area have evolved over time. This year, with Bill S-13, we are trying to reach a balance to ensure proper and reasonable release of information for historical research. However, adequate protection of privacy must also be ensured.

After 92 years, genealogical and historical research using data collected during a census can be conducted only with written authorization. All research projects are subject to an assessment of their scientific and public value.

There are conditions and criteria to ensure that, ultimately, this bill will take into consideration the provisions included in previous legislation. It also takes into account changes that have occurred over the last century.

We want to adopt legislation that will ensure, during the next century, proper management of all this so that historians, genealogists and others wanting to conduct appropriate and adequate research can do so within an adequate regulatory framework. However, there is also a legislative provision so that individuals who do not wish to release such data will be protected for life.

I think that, consequently, this is an acceptable compromise.

[*English*]

Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore, PC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to speak today to Bill S-13. It is a bill on which many members of Parliament have been lobbied.

Certainly, there is a need to open up the census information. I do not think there was an intent, at least the professional panel never found an intent, under the original wording to protect information in perpetuity.

Unlike the member from the Bloc, I would suggest that we do not have the right to protect information in perpetuity. I realize that some information given to the census may be sensitive, but I fail to see any rational argument that after 92 years information cannot be released.

Bill S-13 was introduced by the hon. Senator Sharon Carstairs, Leader of the Government in the Senate. After a short debate, it received second reading on February 11, 2003. It was referred to the Senate Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology. The bill has been a long time in coming. It has been before both Houses now for nearly a year and it is time that we move it forward with at least some degree of alacrity.

The purpose of Bill S-13 is to make census records available for research and to the public after a certain period of time. As such, the bill is designed to remove a legal ambiguity that currently exists with respect to post-1901 census records. The bill would allow access by historical and genealogical researchers to census records between 1910 and 2003 under certain conditions, beginning 92 years after the census took place. The census records would then be available for examination without restrictions after 112 years. The bill also contains provisions to avert potential problems in releasing future census data.

It is absolutely essential for genealogists to have access to information. It is absolutely essential for a number of Canadians who may be trying to trace their ancestry or who may be trying to establish their aboriginal rights to have access to census records. If

we do not give out this information, then people cannot use that tool, which may be the only tool to prove their ancestry. It is a legal issue. It is not complicated. It is just a matter of opening the door and allowing the information out.

Census records up to and including the 1901 census have already been made available for public use. The data from the 1891 and 1901 censuses was released by the National Archives 92 years after its collection. In 1998, however, the 1906 census records were not released, despite the passage of 92 years. At that time the legal opinion from the federal Department of Justice concluded that later censuses, specifically 1911 onward, were conducted under changes to the law that legally guaranteed the information would not be shown to any other person. As such, the potential existed to prevent the release of any other census records.

It would be a serious mistake not to release this information, particularly, for genealogists, historians, or anyone who is interested in tracing their ancestry or even studying the social values and the progression of history. Most of these people are already dead.

I can certainly go back to the 1831 census in the small community in which I live and find my direct ancestor's names, all down through the census. William Alexander Keddy lived in Lake Ramsay. It is a clear record: naming his children, how many animals he kept on the farm, what was his trade, and his place of business. It is a fantastic record for genealogists. We cannot somehow close the door and not allow people to find information about their own family members.

● (1815)

Everyone does not keep a diary. As a matter of fact, the majority of people do not keep a diary.

An expert panel on the historical value of the census records was formed. It came out in favour of releasing the information. It put a lot of thought into this issue. In its summary, the panel stated:

The Panel is firmly convinced of the benefits of the release of historical census records. The Panel is of the view that with the passage of time, the privacy implications of the release of the information diminishes and that the passage of 92 years is sufficient to deal with such concerns. We are persuaded that a guarantee of perpetual confidentiality was not intended to apply to the census. We believe that the indication of transfer to the National Archives also implied an intention that the census records would eventually become public and we would not view any legislation deemed necessary to do so as a breaking of a promise to respondents. We view the historical and international precedents as fully supportive of this position. The Panel is equally convinced of the value of the census and other work of Statistics Canada and is unwilling to make any recommendation which it believes will jeopardize this work. It is for that reason that we recommend release of the pre-1918 Census records and post-2001 records on a 92-year cycle, while advising some caution regarding any legislative steps that might be thought necessary to effect the release of those census records for the period 1921 to 2001.

The truth is, and it is a very simple truth, that a lot of people do not want more recent census records opened up because of taxation issues. That is the very reason the original respondents to the original censuses in Canada did not want to put down how much property they owned, the value of it, and the amount of livestock they held. It is a very simple application here.

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There are a number of arguments in favour of releasing census records.

Without the release of any census records, historians will lose important information about our nation's heritage and those interested in genealogy will lose important information about their ancestors.

Privacy interests are minimal after 92 years—and I think we would all have to agree with that—and are outweighed by the public interest in having access to historical documents.

No perpetual guarantee of confidentiality was ever made.

Most of the information collected by the census is not of a highly sensitive nature and the information that may be sensitive, such as income data, is likely to lose its sensitivity over time.

While census respondents were told that their responses would be confidential, there was also evidence of an intent to preserve the information for the use of future generation. For example, it is stored at the National Archives, which has always had the mandate to store information for future use.

Many of the concerns relating to the privacy of census records relate to short term issues that are irrelevant 92 years after the fact. For example, people were worried that the information could be used for taxation purposes.

Other countries routinely release census records without arousing contention. For example, in Britain and the United States, records are released after 100 years and 72 years, respectively.

This is a good bill. It has been supported by historical and genealogical societies across the country. They have lobbied Parliament hard to have this piece of legislation passed. I agree with it totally and have no difficulty at all supporting it.

● (1820)

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know all hon. members have been seized with this issue from time to time for a long period of time.

The member did say one thing, though, that caught my attention. He said that, in his judgment, the information included in a census was not of a nature that would need to have protection under perpetual confidentiality. The question really is, as legislators, is it our job to determine what is confidential or needs to be held confidential or not, or whether it is to respect the undertaking?

If the undertakings made by genealogists and those willing do historical research pursuant to the regulations for access to the information after 92 years, how does the 112 year provision, whereby anyone can have full access without any undertaking, satisfy the concern that was raised initially, which was that the information would be held confidential in perpetuity?

Mr. Gerald Keddy: Mr. Speaker, first of all, the member states that it is my assertion that somehow I have come across this information or that it simply appeared to me, I guess, as an epiphany. That is just simply not correct.

I was actually quoting—and I would expect if the member had done his research on this, he would have come to the same

conclusion—from the results of the expert panel. It is not my decision. There was a panel formed.

The Expert Panel on Access to Historical Census Records was established by the Minister of Industry in 1999 to examine the issue of disclosure. The members of the panel were: Dr. Richard Van Loon as the chair, president of Carleton University; the hon. Lorna Marsden, president and vice-chancellor of York University; professor Chad Gaffield of the University of Ottawa; professor John McCamus of Osgoode Hall Law School; and retired Supreme Court of Canada judge, the hon. Gérard La Forest.

This is not an issue of partisan politics. This is not an issue about one political party or one member's interests. This expert panel concluded that no perpetual guarantee of confidentiality was ever intended to be attached to the census records. That is a pretty straightforward answer.

We seem to run about here like chicken little every time we feel there is information that we do not agree with. We have the right to disagree with whatever legislation, but there was an expert panel formed that looked at all the information that was in front of it.

If there is any final discrepancy about the confidentiality, it is very easy to just eliminate that from future censuses. In the meantime, we do not want to leave a gap of 100 years. We cannot. It would be irresponsible of us, as members of Parliament, to not allow access to this information. This specific information from Statistics Canada is a gold mine for historians, statisticians, genealogists, and social engineers. There is a whole wealth of information that somehow we are going to say we cannot have access to.

There is a very solid argument against the confidentiality issue. I recognize it and I will agree with the member that it is not something that should be simply discounted, but there is a lot of information to say otherwise. The importance of the ability of family members and genealogists to trace their roots takes precedence over any ambiguous claims for confidentiality.

● (1825)

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that my colleague, like me, supports this legislation, and I agree with the interpretation of his last reply.

It is not a matter of correcting what the member said in his remarks, but of putting a slightly different slant on it. In his enthusiasm he made the point that this was fully available public information. He gave the example of his own family and what a valuable thing it was to know about his ancestors. He is quite right about that.

However the purpose of the compromise between the 92 years and the 112 years is not to deal with a family that wants to know about its own background. It is where some other family wants to know about another family's background. It is our job as legislators to deal with that matter. This is where the privacy aspects come in and that is why I support that for professional use, for want of a better word, 92 years is a good time. There should be some procedures for accessing the information up to 92 years, then after 112 years it would become a matter of easy public access.

My point to the member is that we legislators have a role and it is not to protect his family's information from him. In the general case it is to protect the privacy of people who might want the information to remain private.

●(1830)

The Deputy Speaker: Before I give the floor to the member, I would just remind the House that government orders has been extended by seven minutes due the time taken for a vote earlier this day. We will conclude government orders at 6:37 this evening. The hon. member for South Shore.

Mr. Gerald Keddy: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for his question. Actually it was more of a statement than a question, and I quite agree with his statement.

I have no difficulty accepting that 92 years is a reasonable period of time for the majority of information contained in the census records to be released. I would even go a step further and say we do not need the extra 20 years behind that. After 92 years, to tack 20 years on to that and go to 112 years is questionable. However if that quells any fears or any substantive issues that members or individuals of the public may have surrounding this, then I have no problem or difficulty with it.

After 112 years of not so private information to be begin with being held in secrecy, it would not hurt to release that information to the general public. I would agree entirely with the member.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to show the support of the New Democratic Party for Bill S-13. One thing I would like to highlight is the bill clarifies and corrects a situation which we have had with previous legislation going back in the country's history. It also sets an example and deals with how we will handle census information in the future. It is important to note that.

Census information is important not only for genealogical and historical reasons, but also for the decisions we make in the country. In fact today there is a story in the *Globe and Mail* with the title, "— Census statistics save Ottawa \$1-billion". It reviews the census information over the past year. The reallocation of funds are determined by the census data. It affects social policy, government decision making about expenditures and all the different things we do in terms of legislation, which at the end of the day will have a result upon the services that we will provide as a country.

Bill S-13 would remove a legal clause that was ambiguous at best in relation to the access to census records taken between 1910 and 2003. It would give all genealogical and historical researchers access to the records under certain conditions for a 20 year period, beginning 92 years after the census.

The important thing, which I think we sometimes forget, is it also sets the terms and conditions past 2003, and that is where we decide enlightened consent about whether we as citizens will allow that information to be released.

I have noted this before and I will take a little time today to identify what we are doing with statistical information in terms of the actual decision to accumulate that data through private tender outsourcing, outside government hands, to Lockheed Martin, one of the world's largest multinational arms manufacturers. It is not even a

Adjournment Debate

Canadian company. It plays to the whole issue as to how confident Canadians will feel about making personal decisions to release information not only about their age but also about gender and other issues related to their lifestyles that would then be accumulated for decision making.

Specifically on this amendment, genealogists or their authorized representatives would agree in advance that they would release only tombstone information pertaining to their own family members. Tombstone information includes such information as name, address, age and/or date of birth, sex, relationship to head of family or household, marital status, country, place of birth, year of immigration to Canada if an immigrant and occupation or trade.

It is very important for them to be able to trace those specific aspects. It is not uncommon as members of Parliament to receive many different questions from people looking to track their family histories, for health reasons, for historical reasons about their status, for reasons about their own cultural history and background that was previously contained outside the realm which we want to now open up for them. This is a reasonable compromise that has been achieved by the experts who sat down and discussed this very sensitive issue relating to privacy.

Historical researchers would have the public and scientific nature of their proposed research confirmed by appropriate peers or community leaders prior to starting their work. Again, only tombstone information would be released.

The conditions would be in effect for a 20 year period following the release of the historical census records, 92 years after the census. After 112 years, the conditions would be removed and access and release would be unfettered.

The period of 112 years sounds like a long time. I hope we all in this room live to 112 years and have long and prosperous lives. Maybe some people do not. There is the fact that people could agree to have their information released but other family members would then have their data exposed. That is a very sensitive issue for those existing family members.

●(1835)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Windsor West will have approximately 15 minutes remaining when Bill S-13 is called back before the House.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House of Commons to advocate again for the city of Windsor and for our border crossing.

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More than a year ago the government created a plan with the province of Ontario, and announced \$300 million in funding. Then later on it came in with a 60-day committee. It took the committee longer than a year to present what it called a nine point plan.

My question of the day relates to the fact that right now the city of Windsor has a gateway action plan, but it has a problem. Approximately 9,000 hazardous material trucks illegally cross the border each year, breaking both Canadian and U.S. laws. This statistical information came from the province of Ontario. Despite the security risk, the industry and finance ministers did not seem to care about that.

We have a crossing for hazardous materials in the city of Windsor. It is the Windsor-Detroit truck ferry which is pre-authorized. It is the only crossing in Canada where the data on the materials is gathered before the vehicles are loaded on the ferry and then sent across. In fact this ferry service received a grant from Tom Ridge, under the homeland security act, because of its operations. There were 14 years without problems.

What is happening is many of these hazardous material trucks are crossing over the Ambassador Bridge, breaking U.S. laws. This government has entirely left the ferry service out of our current border crossing plan, despite the fact that it could be the quickest, the cheapest and, most important, the safest for certain types of materials that are crossing the border.

Recently we had the explosion of a gasoline truck on I-75 in Detroit, Michigan. This could happen on the Ambassador Bridge as well. There is no security. The trucks drive straight on and anything could happen.

The frustration in my community comes from the fact that there are consensus items about the nine point plan that the government has put in place, but it has not done anything with them. One is a pre-staging area where trucks would go to a certain area to be staged and marshalled through. The second is the ferry service. As well, there are pedestrian crosswalks and a number of other things.

Unfortunately, we had a recent tragedy where a resident was killed on Heron Church Road. Despite the fact that we have had this advocacy for our community about the contentious plan, the government will not move on the items of consensus which I have noted.

Interestingly enough, the Minister of Industry came before the industry committee to testify. He said that the plan was a package. He said that the government could not do the pre-authorized staging area beforehand or anything else because it all happened at once and nothing was moving on the file until they met with the new provincial ministers and there was a municipal election.

Just last week the Minister for International Cooperation, the member for Essex, said that there was actually movement on the plan and that things were happening. We do not know in our community from where the leadership is coming.

I want to know why the government is allowing us to break U.S. laws and threatening the residents of my community by the fact that these hazardous material trucks are on the streets and crossing

illegally. The government is not providing sufficient funds to get the trucks to cross at the designated crossing.

Why can we not move on items of consensus? Today it has been reported that since 9/11 the border crossing has cost this area \$100 million.

• (1840)

Mr. Marcel Proulx (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to start by reassuring Canadians in the strongest possible terms that dangerous goods are not illegally crossing the Ambassador Bridge.

Yes, the government is going ahead with major improvements to the border infrastructure, which are sorely needed and much anticipated by commercial and local interests. The Governments of Canada and Ontario recently announced the next steps in the implementation of the Windsor gateway action plan, recognizing the economic importance of the Windsor gateway and the need to improve the approaches to the border crossings.

The federal government has committed its share of the border infrastructure fund toward major infrastructure improvements at the Windsor border points. The Windsor gateway action plan includes upgrades to the road network, along with the deployment of technologies that will facilitate the flow of traffic and enhance access to the border.

In September 2002, the federal and Ontario governments announced a total of \$300 million to improve approaches on the Ontario side of the Windsor-Detroit border crossing. The federal portion comes from the border infrastructure fund. A joint management committee has been tasked to examine how the funds should be allocated.

As I mentioned earlier, on May 27, 2003, the Governments of Canada and Ontario announced the next step in the implementation of the Windsor gateway action plan. The terms and conditions of the border infrastructure fund are such that only land based infrastructure is eligible. These initiatives follow the memorandum of understanding signed on September 25, 2002, to provide \$300 million over the next five years to upgrade infrastructure approaches on the Ontario side of the border.

I am actually pleased that the hon. member opposite has raised this question, as there has indeed been a public perception that dangerous goods are totally banned from the Ambassador Bridge and that truck drivers remove dangerous goods placards in order to avoid delays or detours.

To refer to the matter the hon. member raised in June, the transportation of dangerous goods regulations require safe transportation of dangerous goods for all modes, whether the goods are being carried on a ferry or across the bridge. Indeed, there are private rules imposed by the owners of the privately owned bridge. These rules are not a total ban. There are conditions which include the type, quantities, speeds and time of day under which one can carry dangerous goods across the Ambassador Bridge.

Adjournment Debate

Customs officials accept dangerous goods at both the bridge and ferry crossings. Customs officers always check whether dangerous goods are carried and whether the documents and the safety marks, such as placards, are consistent with the goods being carried. I have been informed that no problems have been reported.

There is a regime of regular inspections plus occasional Transport Canada and Ontario joint transportation of dangerous goods inspection blitzes, which have shown that the removal of placards is a rare event. This has not occurred by accident, if the House will excuse the turn of phrase, but is the result of a great deal of work by federal and provincial inspectors, and the industry has complied.

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, it is nothing short of incredible. We have had several media reports, as well as footage of truck drivers admitting to taking their placards off or to knowing people who do that on a regular basis. It is something that happens all the time.

It also does not deal with the fact that we will allow those goods to sit on our city streets in lineups hour after hour in front of schools, businesses and residences because they are not diverted to the truck ferry service. It is ironic, because this truck ferry service could actually provide some type of benefit immediately and the government is punishing it by making it pay for customs officials, the only one in the country. The government also even makes them pay for the ferry ice breaking service that the U.S. Coast Guard does. The U.S. Coast Guard provides that service.

So I would ask the parliamentary secretary, has he actually talked to his staff? Has he seen the media reports? Would he want to come to my community and talk to the people who are taking off the placards and putting our community at risk?

• (1845)

Mr. Marcel Proulx: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned before, inspectors from the Canadian government and the Ontario government carry out regular inspections, and I am informed that this does not occur. According to what my hon. colleague is saying, this is happening on a regular basis. According to our inspectors, it is not happening on a regular basis. It is in fact rare that it happens.

HEALTH

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I am referring to a question I asked on May 29 specifically regarding fetal alcohol syndrome. Although I have to refer to that one question, Mr. Speaker, I want you to know that I have raised this question repeatedly in the House since April 2001, when in fact this place gave almost unanimous support to a private member's motion I introduced requiring labels on all alcohol beverage containers, which were to state a warning that drinking alcohol during pregnancy can cause fetal alcohol syndrome.

Here I am today, two and a half years after the government promised to act, after this place, Parliament, made a commitment to the people of Canada that it would act; here I am, asking again, where is the action? Why has the government not taken the necessary steps to implement the will of Parliament?

I hope that I do not get the usual drivel from the government. Or should I say from the dictatorship? I do not want drivel from the dictatorship anymore. I would like some action on an issue that is

very important to Canadians, an issue that matters a great deal to people who have to live with fetal alcohol syndrome and to all the families and friends and supporters of people who have fetal alcohol syndrome and know exactly what we are talking about.

We are talking about an issue that costs taxpayers an enormous amount of money because of the inaction of this government. It costs about \$1 million per person in the lifetime of a child to treat fetal alcohol syndrome, yet it is entirely preventable. How is it preventable? It is preventable if we can convince women who are pregnant not to drink during their pregnancy. One way we can do that is to put labels on bottles saying that there is a problem if they drink when they are pregnant. It is done in other countries. It is a matter of public policy in many other governments. For our neighbours to the south of us, it is a requirement that all alcohol beverage containers have such a warning from the Surgeon General. Obviously, Canadian manufacturers of liquor, wine and beer who want to export to the United States have to put those labels on the bottles, do they not?

All we are asking is for the government to have the courage to stand up to the brewers, to the liquor industry and to the alcohol corporations and say that there is one small thing they can do for the good of all. It will not cost taxpayers a penny and it is really not going to affect the bottom line of those liquor corporations, but it is going to make a tiny bit of difference in our persistent pursuit of the eradication of fetal alcohol syndrome in our society today.

I do not know what else I can say to the government to make it wake up and take notice. We had a motion passed almost unanimously by Parliament. We have surveys showing that 90% of Canadians absolutely support this small measure. We have had letter after letter from pediatric societies and from medical associations, from the Alberta Medical Association, the Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association and other organizations, asking why we are dragging our heels on this matter.

I ask again today. I plead with the government to do what is important for the children of this land and bring in this very important motion and ensure that we do everything we can to prevent fetal alcohol syndrome.

• (1850)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jeannot Castonguay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by praising the efforts expended by the hon. member in seeking an approach to the very serious problem of fetal alcohol syndrome.

I share her concerns about the necessity of taking steps to address one of the major avoidable causes of congenital defects and developmental delay in Canadian children.

FAS results in irreversible disabilities associated with social, emotional and financial difficulties for those with the syndrome as well as their families and caregivers. They require ongoing support and our interventions must be as effective and efficient as possible.

Adjournment Debate

Our government acknowledges the complex and urgent nature of this issue. The multi-faceted strategy includes a study of the effectiveness of warning labels as a total approach to FAS.

Hon. members will recall that Motion M-155, passed by this House in April 2001, called upon the government to consider the advisability of requiring all alcoholic beverages to carry a visible and clearly printed label warning that drinking alcohol during pregnancy can cause birth defects.

As has already been reported to the House, the information we have obtained so far has not allowed us to conclude that labels warning of the dangers of alcohol use would have the impact we all want to see, namely a change in the risky behaviour of drinking during pregnancy.

We are, however, continuing to consult the most reliable studies and to examine the opinions of experts in this field. Our objective is to apply measures that make the most efficient use of our resources while obtaining outcomes that are as positive as possible, ultimately.

The Government of Canada has been proactive in its response to FAS-related issues. In 1999 funding was increased by \$11 million in order to expand the number and scope of community projects under CPNP, the Canadian prenatal nutrition program.

We have provided funding for preventive, educational and public awareness activities, early intervention, the development of practical tools for the CPNP, the establishment of strategic project assistance fund, an FAS web site, monitoring, and coordination and collaboration.

Funding was also used for early detection, diagnosis and training, including the development of a training manual entitled *A Manual for Community Caring*. A national survey of health care professionals was undertaken to identify knowledge and attitudes with respect to FAS and the use of alcohol during pregnancy.

Health Canada will publish its findings in a number of formats that will be used to improve the education and training of health care providers.

Health Canada is also working with representatives from Canadian diagnostic centres to prepare recommendations for standardized guidelines with respect to diagnosis and patient referral. This measure is the first stage in a process that will lead to the collection of data on the incidence and frequency of FAS in Canada.

We have also formed a national advisory committee that will provide valuable recommendations on the issue of FAS, including the use of labels to warn about the risks of alcohol use, as part of a comprehensive prevention strategy.

In the December 2001 budget we announced an additional \$25 million to treat FAS on reserves, in cooperation with our first nations partners.

The Minister of Health has promised to develop a national action plan on FAS in cooperation with our many partners. The minister is currently bringing together participants from all the parties in Canada, working in this area, to create a viable action plan.

This plan relies on a comprehensive coordinated and cooperative approach that will bring together the best evidence and experience available on the most effective strategies for preventing FAS.

In this context, we will continue in our efforts to combat FAS and to provide support to people, their families, care providers and communities.

[*English*]

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: Mr. Speaker, I feel sorry for the parliamentary secretary. He must be embarrassed after reading such drivel from the Minister of Health and her departmental officials. We have heard that all before.

What the member forgets to mention is that this issue was studied long before my motion came on the books and long before Parliament gave almost unanimous support for a simple measure to put warning labels on alcohol beverage containers.

I do not know how the member can stand in his place, look anyone straight in the eye and say what he just said with any kind of integrity. He should go back to the Minister of Health and the department and say that this is outrageous.

This kind of dictatorship is unacceptable. What is going on with the government? Is it that much in the pockets of the brewers in this country? Is it that dependent upon the alcohol industry for donations? Are payoffs going on? What is stopping the government from taking one small step toward the prevention of fetal alcohol syndrome?

• (1855)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jeannot Castonguay: Mr. Speaker, I shall repeat what I said to be sure that you understood. The Minister of Health has promised to develop a national action plan on FAS. This plan relies on a comprehensive, coordinated and cooperative approach that will bring together the best evidence and experience available on the most effective strategies for preventing FAS.

The Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24 (1).

(The House adjourned at 6:55 p.m.)

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