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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, March 23, 2000

Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent

CONTENTS

(Table of Contents appears at back of this issue.)

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, March 23, 2000

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

• (1005)

[*Translation*]

CANADIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

The Deputy Speaker: I have the honour to lay upon the table the annual report of the Canadian Human Rights Commission for 1999.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1010)

[*English*]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Derek Lee (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to three petitions.

* * *

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Bill Graham (Toronto Centre—Rosedale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present pursuant to Standing Order 31, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian delegation of the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association to the OSCE, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, parliamentary assembly standing committee meeting in Vienna, Austria, on January 13 and 14 of this year.

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Derek Lee (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to its mandate under Standing Order 108(3)(a)(vi), I have the honour to present the 22nd report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs concerning additional issues raised during the committee's consideration of Bill C-2, the Canada Elections Act.

* * *

INCOME TAX ACT

Mr. Jim Pankiw (Saskatoon—Humboldt, Ref.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-459, an act to amend the Income Tax Act (withholding of tax by employers and others).

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to introduce this bill entitled an act to amend the Income Tax Act (withholding of tax by employers and others).

The purpose of this enactment is to remove as from January 1, 2001, the requirement that employers and all others making payments to a taxpayer that is subject to taxation must withhold from the payment an amount estimated as the taxpayer's tax obligation and remit it to the government.

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

* * *

MARRIAGE (PROHIBITED DEGREES) ACT

Mr. Jim Pankiw (Saskatoon—Humboldt, Ref.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-460, an act to amend the Marriage (Prohibited Degrees) Act in order to protect the legal definition of marriage by invoking section 33 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to introduce this bill entitled an act to amend the Marriage (Prohibited Degrees) Act in order to protect the legal definition of marriage by invoking section 33 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The purpose of this enactment is to legally define marriage as being a union between one man and one woman as husband and

Government Orders

wife and will protect the legal definition of marriage from challenge in the courts under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in section 33.

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

* * *

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS ACT

Mr. Jim Pankiw (Saskatoon—Humboldt, Ref.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-461, an act to amend the Statutory Instruments Act (regulatory accountability).

He said: Mr. Speaker, this bill, an act to amend the Statutory Instruments Act (regulatory accountability), would increase regulatory accountability by causing the government through the designated minister to refer all delegated legislation to a committee for consideration.

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

* * *

PETITIONS

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Mr. Mac Harb (Ottawa Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this petition asks that parliament take all necessary measures to ensure that the possession of child pornography remains a serious criminal offence.

• (1015)

HEALTH CARE PROFESSION

Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Wanuskewin, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition today containing a total of 2,862 signatures.

The petitioners object to the violation of the rights of religion and freedom of conscience by those in the health care profession where they have been stripped of those rights. They cite examples of hospitals where nurses are forced to assist in abortion against their deeply held religious and moral convictions and some have lost their jobs in this matter.

They call on parliament to enact legislation against such violations of conscience rights by administrators in medical facilities and educational institutions.

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Wanuskewin, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I have another petition with respect to the status of pornography in certain provinces in our country.

Two hundred and twenty nine petitioners express their horror that pornography depicting children is now legally allowed within our country and is not regarded as criminal.

They ask for the enactment and enforcement of the criminal code provisions to protect those most vulnerable in society from sexual-abuse. They ask that all measures be taken such that possession of child pornography would remain a serious criminal offence.

TAXATION

Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Wanuskewin, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, my last petition is on the matter of taxes.

The petitioners are asking that something serious be done about the high taxes that we have, which have grown over the course of time. They call on parliament to give Canadian taxpayers a break by instituting tax relief of at least 25% in federal taxes over the next two years starting with the next federal budget.

DIVORCE ACT

Mr. Bryon Wilfert (Oak Ridges, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I have the pleasure of presenting a petition with regard to amending the Divorce Act to include a provision, as supported in Bill C-367, with regard to the right of grandparents to access or custody of children.

* * *

[Translation]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

CANADIAN INSTITUTES OF HEALTH RESEARCH ACT

The House resumed from February 24 consideration of Bill C-13, an act to establish the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, to repeal the Medical Research Council Act and to make consequential amendments to other acts, as reported (with amendment) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak to Bill C-13. This bill will benefit the whole community in terms of our quality of life.

Government Orders

What we are talking about this morning is the establishment of health research institutes so that research is better coordinated and better organized and that health research can benefit from increased funding.

The purpose of these institutes of health research is to replace the Medical Research Council and to provide additional funding for health research to the tune of \$500 million over three years.

The bill before us responds to recommendations made by a temporary committee made up of 34 members from the scientific and academic community.

I would like to remind hon. members of what the health research institutes will be. They will replace the Medical Research Council. They will have the very broad mandate of carrying out research in order to make health research a cutting edge sector, as was done with the communications sector in 1990.

What the Medical Research Council wanted, and what it called for, was for medical research to be given a lead role so that research could be carried out in response to the new market realities.

We are very much in favour of the creation of the Institutes of Health Research, let there be no ambiguity about that. The Bloc Quebecois accepts the legitimate right of these institutes to be created. Various points have been raised by various people, leading to the bill we have before us today.

It is said that these research institutes will not be centralized bricks-and-mortar facilities. They are virtual institutes. This will make it possible for researchers, academics, hospitals and various research centres in Canada to exchange information.

• (1020)

The Bloc Quebecois agrees with and supports the establishment of these virtual research centres. We know that no decision has yet been reached on the type of institutes to be created; the task force has listed a number of themes, however. They are 150 in all, and I will mention just a few of them: ageing, genome, technology and clinical assessment, heart disease, stroke, musculo-skeletal development. All of these sectors are of daily concern to the public, for instance cancer and new diseases.

The stakes are very high. We also know that people live longer. Consequently, we will have to be able to deal with these problems and to ensure this system is well implemented, allowing researchers to respond to the demand. They will also be able to know what is being done in the field of research elsewhere, in Canada and in other countries.

I do not want that there be any ambiguity in the willingness of the Bloc Quebecois to support the different high technology sectors in the research and development field.

We are in favour of this multidisciplinary approach. We know very well how it could promote science. All researchers want these virtual institutes to be implemented. The objective is to create between 10 and 15 research institutes, and their funding will be doubled over the next three years. There is a great demand for funds.

I have attended the meetings of the Standing Committee on Health. We know that researchers are all looking for funding so that more advanced research can be done. Operations are supposed to start on April 1, 2000. This is a deadline to which researchers and the federal government are hanging on.

We in the Bloc Quebecois are very vigilant. We wish April 1, 2000 will be the deadline so that things can get under way. However, we are very touchy about the wording of this bill, which clearly infringes on provincial health jurisdictions.

With regard to the support of the budget increase, we commend the effort the bill reflects. As for the communication of health information, this is where there is a great difference in the wording of Bill C-13. What bothers us is the words that are used.

We submitted several amendments to ensure that the institutes would only communicate information on health and would not get involved into the management side of the health sector, because this would be going beyond the communication of information, which is what Bill C-13 is all about.

In its current form, the bill squarely infringes on the jurisdiction of the provinces in the health sector. The bill goes beyond promoting research. It contains several references to health related issues that come exclusively under the jurisdiction of the provinces. The bill does not recognize responsibilities of the provinces. It makes mere actors of them and of the organizations and people who are involved in health.

It gives national mandates to the institutes, without the provinces' involvement. This is dangerous because it is the provinces that have responsibility over health and its management.

The Bloc Quebecois cannot support such a measure. I am aware of the pressure to make the Bloc Quebecois look like a spoilsport, like a troublemaker, but we must look at the long term implications of such a bill. In its current wording, it would support the federal government's intention to set national standards, to apply a certain type of management and to prioritize certain processes in health.

• (1025)

We are well aware that research and development fall into the federal government's residual powers. The Bloc Quebecois agrees with that. It is the federal government's role to help the provinces with research and development so that they can thrive.

Government Orders

However, we cannot accept that, through some tricks, the federal government would use this legislation to centralize all the decisions made in the health sector. Indeed, the bill provides many opportunities for direct infringement on the provinces' jurisdiction in health, this without any consultation.

That is why the Bloc Québécois is proposing amendments. If the federal government really wants to discuss seriously with the provinces, if it agrees to respect the autonomy of the provinces, then it will accept these amendments by the Bloc Québécois so that we can come to an understanding and move ahead when the April 1 deadline arrives. Our constituents are lobbying to have this bill adopted.

However, we also have to be careful because we know what the government has done with the Canada social transfer, deep cuts to transfers to the provinces. It had announced \$48 billion worth of cuts and \$30 billion have been cut since 1993. Each time the government hands out a paltry \$2.4 billion, it tells us that it is investing in health. It is not investing in health at all. The only thing it is doing is reducing the cuts that were announced.

It is very important to look at this bill. The government should be working with the Bloc Québécois and all the other opposition parties to give full jurisdiction to the provinces in matters of health and confine itself to the flow of information and the networking of virtual health and research institutes.

I know that this is a truly important social issue. The Bloc Québécois has said so on many occasions and I say so again this morning. I hope that the government will act in good faith because we are. We would not want our communities, our researchers and our universities to be penalized. We would not want to be considered as not wanting funds to go to health and research. This is not at all what we want to achieve by our amendments. We only want to further define the role of the Canadian government in health.

[*English*]

Mr. Mac Harb (Ottawa Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will not be taking my full 10 minutes but I will make a few comments about the importance of this act.

I have been approached by many people in the medical community in the Ottawa area who, before the government decided to proceed with this initiative, have lobbied and written letters to the Minister of Health, as well as to government officials and their members of parliament, demanding that the government initiate and introduce such an initiative.

I am delighted to see the government responding to the needs of the community and establishing this particular institute. This will set an example for other fields where we could bring together institutions, people who are on the front lines, different levels of government, agencies and the private sector so they can collectively work in the best interests of the public.

I was quite surprised that we did not have such an institute a long time ago. Given the kind of confederation and the kind of arrangement we have in Canada, one would think that this would have been the most obvious thing that we would have done 15 or 20 years ago, where we would have an agency that would look at best practices, that would exchange information and that would disseminate information across the country, and an agency where we would look at what others are doing in different fields around North America and, for that matter, all around the world.

I would say that it is high time. Finally we have something being put in place that will achieve what should have been done many years ago. To that extent I think the Minister of Health, as well as the government, is to be commended for taking this bold initiative and finally introducing what will be a step in the right direction.

• (1030)

I would say it is one of the finest initiatives in the area of research and development at the national level, particularly in the medical community. All we have to do is look at some of the institutes and some of the organizations in our own backyard here in the national capital region where we have some of the best pioneers in the whole world.

The World Heart Corporation is a perfect example of co-operation between the public and the private sector. We have the Heart Institute. We have leading professionals working with the Heart Institute in conjunction with the University of Ottawa and the private sector. They put their brain power and their resources together collectively and are now in the process of moving ahead with some of the finest devices anywhere in the world that will change the way we conduct ourselves and will save thousands of lives all across the world.

Initiatives like these would not happen if we did not have the kind of co-operation and the kind of cohesive exchanges of information and partnership between the public and private sectors.

The institute that the government is about to introduce and enact will facilitate more things like that, will bring together more people who have similar aspirations, similar views, similar talent, similar hopes and similar objectives. It will put them together so we can move forward and we can keep Canada on the leading edge in those areas.

I would say that despite all of the deficiencies that we have in our health care system, despite all of the problems that we encounter, we still have one of the finest systems anywhere in the world. I want to commend all those who are involved in trying to revitalize the health care system by trying to inject more blood into it, one might say. It is my hope that we do not lose sight of the fact that we have something that is good. But in thinking it out, what we need to do is bring our resources together so we can keep it healthy, so we can move forward with a system that continues to be the envy of the world.

It does not matter where we go, whether we go to Asia-Pacific, whether we go to Europe, whether we go to Africa or whether we go to the south side of the border, people always use the health care system here in Canada as an example of a system that is good and as an example of a system that responds to the needs of the people.

Now that we are faced with a challenge, which is to keep the health care system for the next 50, 100 and perhaps thousands of years, if we want to keep the system responding to the needs of Canadians we have to work collectively, but we have to work objectively. We have to work in a positive way, not a negative way. We have to find solutions that will respond to the needs of the people, rather than moving away and creating a two-tier system and start shooting at each other and undermining the system.

To the extent that this debate is taking place, it is my hope that it will be a positive one, that it will be a constructive one and that it will be an objective one.

I commend my colleagues on the opposition side for standing to support the government initiative on the Canadian Institutes of Health Research Act. It is my hope that we will push it through quite fast so it will become a reality as quickly as possible.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise after the speech by the member for Québec and speak to Bill C-13 on Canadian Institutes of Health Research at report stage.

This bill presents us with a paradoxical situation and I think that the member for Québec has expressed it very well. The Bloc Québécois agrees with the principle of the bill as drafted, but will not be able to support it because it runs counter to certain fundamental aspects of the Canadian constitution.

I was listening to the comments on the bill by the member from the Ottawa area who spoke just before me.

• (1035)

I would say that, purposely or otherwise, the government has had an incomprehensible memory lapse when it comes to a document that I think is fundamental and essential: the Canadian constitution. It is the mother of all statutes, the ground rules under which we operate.

The Liberal party is approaching the debate as though this basic document governing our daily lives did not exist.

According to the Liberal government, there is one way of thinking in this country, the Liberal party way, one way of doing things, the Liberal party way, and one way of acting, the Liberal party way.

Government Orders

As a background to Bill C-13 and with all due deference, I am going to remind the House of the existence of the document written and adopted in 1867, which was reworked and re-adopted without Québec's consent in 1982.

As the member for Quebec pointed out, and as the member for Hochelaga—Maisonneuve so eloquently explained, we are not opposed to the principle of Bill C-13, but to its basic values.

The government is proposing to replace the Medical Research Council with Canadian Institutes of Health Research. We noticed that and it is fine with us. This consensus is based on recommendations made by an interim committee composed of 34 members of the scientific and academic community.

I am sure neither our critic nor any Bloc Québécois member would ever want to suggest that we know the conditions that should govern the Canadian institutes of health research better than the 34 leading experts who looked at the issue.

Our objections concern the legal and constitutional aspects of the bill, not with terms, because these 34 people coming from the scientific community and academia have done a tremendous job.

The Bloc Québécois also cannot help but welcome, as my colleague from Québec said, the budget increases for research and development. We think that this bill is innovative in many regards, particularly with regard to ethical discussions that promote a multidisciplinary approach.

The governing council will have enough freedom to adapt easily and quickly to the constant changes in the area of research, which are occurring at an ever increasing pace, due to innovation. The legislation required should not provide a very rigid framework but some room for manoeuvre, and we should trust the Canadian leading experts who did a tremendous job in that regard.

At long last, the government is acting to increase its investments in research and development, as the OCDE had been asking since 1993. However, as I explained earlier, the Liberal government is ignoring provincial jurisdictions; it wants to intrude in these jurisdictions, not only in Quebec but also in all the provinces of Canada. We are simply asking the government to comply with section 92 of the Constitution of Canada, which deals with power sharing.

As my colleagues from Québec and Hochelaga—Maisonneuve said earlier, this bill has forgotten provinces by not recognizing their authority in their own jurisdiction.

In 1867, it was easy to leave health to the provinces because it was an expensive area which did not bring in any money. Today, now that health has become a priority for the public, the federal wants to come back. We are only asking that it comply with the constitution.

Government Orders

With this bill, the role of the provinces is being reduced to that of mere actors, like any other stakeholder. The provinces—and I repeat it for the Liberals, who unfortunately tend to forget it—have a specific jurisdiction in the area of health, yet they are treated like any other health organization or stakeholder.

The creation of health research institutes is not the problem. The Bloc supports the increase in funding for research and the establishment of health research institutes. However, Canada does not invest enough in research and we ought to invest more if we want to remain competitive and be leaders in research and development.

• (1040)

I wish to underline the excellent performance, both in medicine and research, of the University of Sherbrooke, which made a clean-sweep of all Canadian first awards in the medical area. It must be recognized that, in medicine as well as in research, Canada and Quebec are doing pretty well. But we must make sure that the necessary financial resources are made available, because the human resources necessary to carry on are already available.

Again, the problem is the serious risk of direct encroachment on provincial jurisdiction in the area of health services to the population, without any consultation with the provinces.

With the establishment of the Canadian institutes of health research, the federal government is clearly grabbing the power to impose its priorities and views in health matters and is going well beyond the area of research. It is imperative for the government to respect the specific expertise and strengths of the research scientists in each region, to allow them to use their skills in their area of expertise and to be as successful as possible.

That is why the Bloc Québécois has moved a series of amendments whose purpose is to reaffirm the primacy of the provincial jurisdiction in health matters; it also stresses the importance of respecting the jurisdictions. Many organizations in Quebec applied for grants to the interim council of the Canadian institutes of health research, and it is extremely important that Quebec get its fair share of research and development funds.

We must be on the leading edge in these areas to move ahead into the 21st century and to ensure the growth and economic development of Quebec and Canada. The federal government must address the problem of the inadequate funding of research, by making more funds available to research scientists and academics to allow them to complete their work.

We, in the Bloc Québécois, have said repeatedly that we support the idea of new investments in research and development and we want even more such investments. But there is one thing we cannot accept, and that is the establishment of Canada-wide standards and the infringement on provincial jurisdictions. If the federal government wants to interfere in provincial matters, it is imperative and necessary that the provinces be fully involved in the selection and management of the institutes.

The government claims that it wants to promote the health of Canadians, but one must not forget that, in the past, it cut transfer payments to provinces for health, education and social services, but mostly for health. We agree that investment in research is important, but let us not forget that a lot of money has been brutally and irresponsibly taken from the provinces. That funding must be restored to them immediately.

The government says it is reinvesting in health services offered by the provinces—I do not want to talk about the billions and billions of dollars bandied about, because the public has difficulty understanding the full scope of the cuts that were made. I will put it this way: it is as if \$100 worth of cuts were made or will be made, but then we were told “We will give you back \$20 and we will cut only \$80”. And we are supposed to be happy because we got back \$20 on the \$100 that were cut without our permission.

We cannot let the federal government invade provincial jurisdictions again, and we cannot continue to ignore the cuts to transfer payments that are causing very serious problems in the area of health.

I hope that the House will pass the amendments moved by the Bloc Québécois so that our researchers and scholars will have access to the funds they need so much and that, I repeat, in conclusion, provincial jurisdictions will be not be invaded.

The Deputy Speaker: I must inform the House that the Chair made an error in recognizing the hon. member for Repentigny. He had already spoken to this group of amendments. This is an error, not a precedent.

[*English*]

Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Deputy Speaker: The question is on Motion No. 1. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

• (1045)

[*Translation*]

And more than five members having risen:

Government Orders

The Deputy Speaker: The recorded division on Motion No. 1 stands deferred. The recorded division will also apply to Motions Nos. 5 to 7, 11, 18, 23, and 24.

The next question is on Motion No. 9. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: The recorded division on Motion No. 9 stands deferred.

The next question is on Motion No. 12. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: The recorded division on Motion No. 12 stands deferred.

The next question is on Motion No. 13. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: The recorded division on Motion No. 13 stands deferred.

The next question is on Motion No. 14. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: The recorded division on Motion No. 14 stands deferred.

The next question is on Motion No. 20. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: The recorded division on Motion No. 20 stands deferred.

The next question is on Motion No. 48. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And more than five members having risen:

Government Orders

The Deputy Speaker: The recorded division on Motion No. 48 stands deferred.

The next question is on Motion No. 49. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: The recorded division on Motion No. 49 stands deferred.

The next question is on Motion No. 50. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: The recorded division on Motion No. 50 stands deferred.

• (1050)

[*English*]

The House will now proceed with the motions in Group No. 2, the first of which is Motion No. 2.

Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, PC) moved:

Motion No. 2

That Bill C-13, in the preamble, be amended by replacing line 15 on page 1 with the following:

“WHEREAS Parliament recognizes the responsibility and jurisdiction”

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ) moved:

Motion No. 3

That Bill C-13, in the preamble, be amended by replacing lines 15 and 16 on page 1 with the following:

“WHEREAS Parliament recognizes the full jurisdiction of the provinces over health services and that the”

Hon. Robert D. Nault (for the Minister of Health, Lib.) moved:

Motion No. 4

That Bill C-13, in the preamble, be amended by replacing lines 15 and 16 on page 1 with the following:

“WHEREAS Parliament recognizes that the provinces are responsible for the delivery of health care to Canadians and that the”

Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, PC) moved:

Motion No. 8

That Bill C-13, in Clause 2, be amended by replacing line 3 on page 3 with the following:

“2. In this Act, “Canadian medical research community” means health practitioners, researchers and academics practising or working in Canada, including voluntary agencies, the private sector, the provinces and the federal granting councils; “Minister” means the”

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ) moved:

Motion No. 10

That Bill C-13, in Clause 4, be amended by replacing line 22 on page 3 with the following:

“strengthened Canadian health care system, with due regard for provincial jurisdiction over health, by”

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ) moved:

Motion No. 15

That Bill C-13, in Clause 4, be amended by deleting lines 14 and 15 on page 4.

Hon. Robert D. Nault (for the Minister of Health, Lib.) moved:

Motion No. 16

That Bill C-13, in Clause 4, be amended by replacing lines 22 and 23 on page 4 with the following:

“required,

(iii) work in collaboration with the provinces to advance health research and to promote the dissemination and application of new research knowledge to improve health and health services; and

(iv) engage voluntary”

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ) moved:

Motion No. 17

That Bill C-13, in Clause 4, be amended by replacing lines 23 to 26 on page 4 with the following:

“(iii) have the provinces participate in the choice of directions and decisions for research; and

Government Orders

(iv) engage the voluntary organizations, the private sector and others, in or outside Canada, with complementary research interests;"

Motion No. 19

That Bill C-13, in Clause 4, be amended by replacing line 37 on page 4 with the following:

"(f) in collaboration with the provinces, addressing emerging health opportuni-"

Motion No. 22

That Bill C-13, in Clause 5, be amended

(a) by adding after line 24 on page 5 the following:

"(b.1) involve the provinces in the choice of directions and decisions and form partnerships with them;"

(b) by replacing line 2 on page 6 with the following:

"ships with persons"

Motion No. 25

That Bill C-13, in Clause 5, be amended by replacing line 19 on page 6 with the following:

"the Governor in Council, with due regard for provincial jurisdiction over health, to achieve its"

Motion No. 26

That Bill C-13, in Clause 6, be amended by replacing line 21 on page 6 with the following:

"6. Subject to section 7.1, the President of the CIHR shall be"

Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, PC) moved:

Motion No. 27

That Bill C-13, in Clause 6, be amended by replacing line 22 on page 6 with the following:

"appointed by the Governor in Council, based on advice taken from the Canadian medical research community, to hold"

Motion No. 28

That Bill C-13, in Clause 6, be amended by replacing lines 23 and 24 on page 6 with the following:

"office for a term of not more than three years. The President is eligible for"

Motion No. 29

That Bill C-13 be amended by adding after line 25 on page 6 the following new clause:

"6.1 (1) The Minister shall conduct an annual review of the performance of the President of CIHR.

(2) The Minister shall advise the President of the upcoming performance review within 30 days after the anniversary date of the President's appointment.

(3) A copy of the performance review, signed by the Minister, shall be forwarded to the President of the CIHR within 90 days of the anniversary date of the President's appointment."

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ) moved:

Motion No. 30

That Bill C-13, in Clause 7, be amended by replacing line 30 on page 6 with the following:

"(2) Subject to section 7.1, each initial member of the Governing"

Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, PC) moved:

Motion No. 31

That Bill C-13, in Clause 7, be amended by replacing line 32 on page 6 with the following:

"appointed by the Governor in Council, based on advice taken from the Canadian medical research community, to hold"

Motion No. 32

That Bill C-13, in Clause 7, be amended by replacing, in the English version, line 38 on page 6 with the following:

"appointed by the Governor in Council, based on advice taken from the Canadian medical research community, for a"

Motion No. 33

That Bill C-13, in Clause 7, be amended by replacing lines 41 to 43 on page 6 with the following:

"tion (2) shall be appointed to no more than two consecutives terms."

Motion No. 34

That Bill C-13, in Clause 7, be amended

"(a) by replacing lines 1 and 2 on page 7 with the following:

"(4) The Governor in Council shall appoint, based on advice taken from the Canadian medical research community, as members of the Governing Council women"

"(b) by replacing line 6 on page 7 with the following:

"nor in Council shall appoint, based on advice taken from the Canadian medical research community"

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ) moved:

Motion No. 35

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

"nor in Council shall provide for representation on the Governing Council that takes the demographic weight of the provinces into account and shall consider appointing"

Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, PC) moved:

Motion No. 36

That Bill C-13 be amended by adding after line 10 on page 7 the following new clause:

"7.1 (1) The President of the CIHR shall conduct an annual review of the performance of each of the members of the Governing Council.

(2) The President shall discuss the performance review with each member of the Governing Council and shall provide a report to the Minister within 30 days after the completion of the performance reviews."

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ) moved:

Government Orders

Motion No. 37

That Bill C-13 be amended by adding after line 10 on page 7 the following new clause:

“7.1 The Governor in Council shall appoint the President of the CIHR and the initial and subsequent members of the Governing Council from lists of names provided by the provinces.”

Motion No. 38

That Bill C-13, in Clause 8, be amended by replacing line 11 on page 7 with the following:

“8. Notwithstanding subsection 7(2) and section 7.1, the”

Motion No. 41

That Bill C-13, in Clause 14, be amended by replacing line 39 on page 8 with the following:

“for the management of the CIHR, with due respect for provincial jurisdiction over health, including”

Motion No. 42

That Bill C-13, in Clause 14, be amended by replacing line 10 on page 9 with the following:

“(g) establishing policies respecting participation of the provinces and consult-”

Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, PC) moved:

Motion No. 45

That Bill C-13, in Clause 20, be amended by replacing line 38 on page 10 with the following:

“the Advisory Boards, based on advice taken from the Canadian medical research community, women and men who are”

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ) moved:

Motion No. 46

That Bill C-13, in Clause 20, be amended by replacing line 41 on page 10 with the following:

“of Canadians. The Governing Council shall provide for representation on the Advisory Boards that takes the demographic weight of the provinces into account and shall”

Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, PC) moved:

Motion No. 47

That Bill C-13, in Clause 20, be amended by replacing line 42 on page 10 with the following:

“appoint, based on advice taken from the Canadian medical research community, women and men who”

Motion No. 51

That Bill C-13, in Clause 21, be amended

“(a) by replacing line 8 on page 11 with the following:

“21. (1) The governing Council shall review the”

(b) by replacing line 15 on page 11 with the following:

“Research Institute or terminated and shall provide a report to the Minister.”

(c) by adding after line 15 on page 11 the following:

“(2) The Minister shall cause a copy of the report to be laid before the House of Commons on any of the first 15 days on which that House is sitting after the Minister receives it.”

Motion No. 52

That Bill C-13, in Clause 21, be amended by replacing line 10 on page 11 with the following:

“Research Institute at least every three years”

Motion No. 55

That Bill C-13, in Clause 31, be amended

(a) by replacing line 1 on page 14 with the following:

“31. (1) The Auditor General of Canada shall”

(b) by adding after line 4 on page 14 the following:

“(2) The Minister shall cause a copy of the report to be laid before each House of Parliament on any of the first 15 days on which that House is sitting after the Minister receives it.”

[Translation]

Mr. Réal Ménard: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to be here, even if it interferes with my presence at the Standing Committee on Justice.

I basically want to remind the House of the gist of our amendments in Group No. 2. The hon. parliamentary secretary and member for Anjou—Rivière-des-Prairies knows that what we want first is that the provinces be closely involved in the development and implementation of Canadian Institutes of Health Research.

The Bloc Québécois, a responsible opposition party intent on continuing to be responsible, is aware that the research community needs money, and significant amounts of money at that.

● (1055)

We have no qualms about acknowledging the injection of an additional \$500 million, which will be available starting next year, for the creation of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, which, as we know, will be virtual institutes. So, the money will not be invested in buildings.

The problem is that the health minister underlines the importance of having the researchers connect through a network, like the OCDE said it should be, and we agree, but the bill provides for an extreme centralization.

The minister talks about institutes of health research, plural, but since there is only one governing council, we should speak instead of a single Canadian institute of health research.

The bill is so centralizing that the president and the chairperson of the governing council are one and the same. Just imagine if, in Quebec, at the baseball division of the Régie des installations olympiques—I take that example because of your athletic dispositions and your love of baseball—there were a president and a chairperson.

Government Orders

We asked the parliamentary secretary and the minister why it had to be the same person. In large public organizations, centralized or decentralized, the principle of checks and balances is considered essential, which means that there is a director general and a chairperson of the board who are not one and the same.

We know that research is an area that evolves rapidly. We want the scientists to be networked, to be linked together in networks. But why not involve the provinces in the definition of the health research institutes?

We are proposing an amendment to make this possible both at the governing council level and in the various advisory committees. We did the same thing when the Canada Labour Code was reviewed, and we also have the preliminary version of the code. My colleague, the hon. member for Laurentides, will deal with the present bill. But a few years ago, when the government chose to amend Part III of the Canada Labour Code, we also tabled an amendment in order to enable the Canada Labour Relations Board to take inspiration from lists proposed by the provinces. We have done exactly the same thing here. We brought in an amendment asking the minister "Why not take inspiration from proposals made by the provinces?"

Jean Rochon, the minister of scientific development, who everyone knows is a great friend of the hon. member for Québec, is in the process of bringing in a science policy. This policy establishes directions to be given developmental priority for health research in Quebec.

What are these areas of priority? Genomics and heredity. The hon. member for Jonquière, who can at the very least be described as a woman of determination, is working hard to get an institute facility in her region, because a pool of researchers, with their expertise and knowledge, are concentrated there.

Not only must there be recognition of the strengths of Quebec as far as genomics and heredity are concerned, but there is also much expertise relating to cancer, and AIDS as well. Quebec is home to some of the most highly reputed researchers in the fields of AIDS and virology.

What we are saying to this government is "If it is your objective to create linkages so that the various researchers can interact in the spirit of complementarity and multidisciplinary, you stand to gain by consulting the provinces". That is the type of amendment we presented.

Many people came to us saying "Please ensure that the \$500 million to be made available is going to really go to research".

• (1100)

The result of this bill will be to abolish the Medical Research Council of Canada. I would have liked the parliamentary secretary to be here listening—I am sure he will agree with me. Once the

Medical Research Council of Canada is abolished, we must make sure that the administration costs that fall to the Canadian institutes of health research under the new structure do not exceed 5%.

We think it would be wrong for the administration costs to be 10%, 15% or 20%. We would not agree with that. I hope that this amendment will meet with the approval of government members.

There is one problem. Perhaps the hon. member for Québec would give us a little smile. There is one problem and it is as follows. There are 13 references to the health care system in the bill. We are prepared to admit that research is an area of shared jurisdiction. The federal government has invested in the research sector since the early 1990s; in fact, its involvement goes back to something like 1910 or 1915 and, with a few notable exceptions, there are very few parliamentarians who were around back then.

The health care sector, however, does not come under federal jurisdiction. We have some concerns that the bill as now worded, with its references to the health care system, will be a way for the federal government to get its foot in the door of jurisdictions where it has no business.

This is why, very candidly and in a spirit of clarity, we moved an amendment asking the government to specify that the health care system does not come under its jurisdiction. The government's determination borders on the obsessive and will make it look rather narrow minded if it does not support our amendment.

I still have hopes that the parliamentary secretary, who has a huge influence within the government, will manage to convince the Minister of Health, a future leadership contender, to support our amendments.

This is a major bone of contention, so much so that the Quebec Minister of Health, Mrs. Marois, and her colleague, Mr. Rochon, took the time to write to the federal health minister to express their concerns. I tabled a copy of that letter in committee. I will be pleased to circulate it if some hon. members are interested in reading it.

Since I have little time left, let me say that we support health research. We believe it is important that researchers be part of a network. We also believe that this bill cannot be part of a nation building process. It must not be the excuse for the federal government to try to get involved in health, particularly in the health care system and in the procurement of equipment at points of service, two areas which come under provincial jurisdiction.

If the government—and I will conclude on this note—supports our amendments, which are very reasonable and certainly not out of line, we would be compelled to rise, at report stage and at third reading, to support this bill, which has some merits, but which appears to promote federal hegemony somewhat.

Government Orders

I invite hon. members to make sure that the government supports the amendments proposed by the Bloc Québécois. We worked hard in committee, we showed up consistently, we heard witnesses and we are very qualified to talk about Quebec's interests. We know that researchers want this bill passed and we are prepared to support it, as long as it respects Quebec's jurisdictions.

• (1105)

[English]

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to address this bill at report stage. Health care is not my area of expertise. However, I have some concerns that I want to raise at this time. As Reformers, we are basically supporting the measures that the government is putting forward.

At the outset, let me state that the devil is in the details. Health care research can have tremendous benefits. It can alleviate a lot of suffering. We do not deny that and that makes it absolutely essential that we explore the area of health care research.

We can save a lot of money in health care spending by doing research in the proper areas and, therefore, adjusting our health care system accordingly. We need to use public money much more efficiently. However, if there is not a balance in the way the money is administered, the effectiveness of that money will be diminished. That must be obvious to all of us.

I feel that there is a bias in Canada today in the medical establishment and in health care research. We can have all of the best intentions in the world, as are outlined in this bill, and we can make all of the best amendments, as we have tried to put forward, and we agree with a lot of them, but if a bias exists in the administration of those funds we do a disservice to Canadians. That is what I mean by the devil is in the details.

For example, we see in Canada a heavy emphasis on research into the effectiveness of drugs and other very intrusive procedures in the handling of health care problems when there is a lot of evidence to indicate that there are very effective alternatives. That is why I feel, when we look at this bill, that we have to ensure that all of these concerns which Canadians have are addressed. Research should not exclude the exploration of these other areas. We need protection in this bill to ensure that happens.

Our health minister made the statement that our health care system needs more than just money to fix it. I could not agree more. However, he then went on to condemn the provinces which explore alternative means of doing just that.

One of the concerns I have is with the group of people who will be administering these health care research funds. Who will be on

the selection committee? How will we ensure that there is a balance, that we do not have just the so-called traditional experts, that we have people who represent all parts of society and all of the concerns which people have?

Although the intent of the CIHR is to foster scientific research and promote Canadian initiatives, there has been little time to consult various scientific communities and other communities which have a great interest in this to receive input as to the scope and area of research. For example, will the applicants themselves direct the bulk of the research or will the nature of research be directed by advisory boards and force applicants to apply for funding in areas dictated by the central body? That is what I mean by getting down to the details.

Although the CIHR will strive to ensure that only 4% to 5% of the total budget will be spent on administrative costs, a new institute will require a bureaucratic infrastructure to perform necessary functions. Can the CIHR avoid the trend of having a huge part of its budget administered for bureaucracy and not have sufficient funds to administer the actual research which is dictated under its mandate? Given the wide scope of its mandate, and it is very broad, will the initial budgetary expenditures be sufficient to carry out its entire mandate? If not, will parliament be required to allocate additional funds for the creation of the institute?

The president of the CIHR will make recommendations to the governor in council as to who should be appointed to the advisory council. The president will make recommendations based on public selection processes. However, will the president follow the advice of the public selection process or will he bypass these recommendations and appoint members of individual choice?

• (1110)

As I have said, there are many good parts to this bill. It appears to be an excellent model of an institute which will remain at arm's length from the federal government and conduct research independent of the government.

The consultation process for appointments will draw on leading experts from every conceivable field of expertise, and I hope that remains the case. That should reduce the influence of high ranking government officials. However, that sometimes is eroded over time and we have to ensure that does not happen.

These and all of the above-mentioned details can be addressed before the committee when the bill reaches that stage. There is a strong need to consult all of the health care communities and all of the people who have an interest in this research. We need their input into this whole area.

We basically support the direction of the bill, but we would hope that the government would take our concerns into account. I could give examples of some of the areas in which we have made huge

mistakes by not looking at all areas of health care which need to have research. Sometimes, because of political correctness, we exclude some of those areas.

Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, PC): Mr. Speaker, for the record, we support the establishment of the Canadian institutes of health research. Listening carefully to the previous speakers, most parties support this bill, but not without reservation. The reason for this is the cynical use of politics which the Prime Minister has displayed in recent years with regard to health care. It makes many of us nervous, especially if we look at the budget which was recently brought down.

When I read the budget and listened to the Minister of Finance introduce it, the first thing that came to my mind was that it was not an election budget. Why? Because health care was the missing equation in the budget with the paltry \$2.5 billion over the next three years that was committed, which will be split between health care and education. That will mean that most provinces will get enough out of the new budget to run their systems for an average of two or three days a year for the next three years. The Liberals just simply paid lip service to health care.

Getting back to the issue before us, I have some problems with the establishment of the institutes. One of my problems is the cynicism which we see in the Prime Minister's approach to health care. He has created a problem and he knows full well that he has the capacity to fix it. He probably will, just slightly before the next election, probably on the eve of the next election, which is rumoured today to be called for October 16. We can expect some recurring announcements in the health care field between now and the end of the summer. The Prime Minister has created the crisis and now he is going to employ Machiavellian politics to fix that very crisis to make himself popular. I do not think it is going to work.

We have a problem with the construction of the institutes. For starters, all of the appointments will be made by the Prime Minister. At page 6 of the bill, line 21 states: "The President of the CIHR shall be appointed by the Governor in Council—". What does the term governor in council imply? It simply means that the Prime Minister, along with the cabinet, will appoint the president. What it boils down to is that I do not trust the Prime Minister to make these appointments. I do not think any of the other party members on this side of the House do either.

• (1115)

The interesting thing is that the governing council, of which there will be no more than 20 members, will again be appointed by the Prime Minister of Canada.

Many of the amendments that we have put forth in this bill address that very concern. We think these changes are necessary to

Government Orders

the bill and will result in the Prime Minister consulting the health community before these very appointments are made. We actually defined in my amendments what we mean by the health community. I think we have to get away from one man determining how this institute will be set up.

One of the things I mentioned in committee was that this is not new in terms of what other countries in the rest of the world have done with institutes like this in the past. In fact, this is modelled after the U.S. example. The biggest difference in the U.S. example is that the president of the United States does not appoint the president of the institute, nor does he appoint the members of the institute, that is the governing council. That is a very important point and I am glad the member picked up on that. The United States operates under a different system. What it has effectively done is depoliticize the process.

I would like to see that done in this bill but the government will probably just give short heed to the amendments on the floor that would actually change the way this committee is structured and the way it is set up.

The other thing is the fact that once this body is established, we have no idea how many institutes there will be. We do know there will be virtual institutes but we have no idea how many there will be and what they will be. There is no indication in the bill what the government is considering.

I think what the Canadian people are demanding today is transparency in everything. What we would expect as opposition members is to see some openness in the selection process so that we in the House can have some input and that the medical community can have some input. There is no evidence of that in the bill. I would say that is the essential flaw in this piece of legislation before us.

We do favour the replacement of the Medical Research Council with this institute. However, if we are going to make a change, let us make a change that will work to the benefit of the health community. I believe the health community and the health care system in this country have suffered greatly under this administration, going back some seven years.

Mr. Speaker, you were sitting in that chair when the government took the biggest cut ever from the health care budget at the expense of every single person in Canada. Now we have a health care system that is under siege because of the neglect by the government. Now we will see the use of what I call Machiavellian politics in the next short number of months to fix a system that the government broke.

What it really boils down to is that I do not trust the Prime Minister hand-picking who will sit on these institutes and then exerting influence on what institutes will be established and how the governing council will function.

Government Orders

I think this is open to some debate within the House. I would love to hear some of the other members address those very concerns over the next few minutes.

[Translation]

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first, I want to say that three words summarize today's debate: encroachment, encroachment and encroachment.

And the government is encroaching in a particularly iniquitous way because we all know the very serious problem cuts to transfer payments have created for the provinces.

• (1120)

This issue has been discussed at length in Quebec. Quebecers did not realize that the problem is as acute in other provinces. We have seen a whole series of absurdities. Believe it or not, people from Saint-Jean have to go to Plattsburgh to get treatment, and this costs Canadian taxpayers a bundle.

So much so that the hospital in Plattsburgh has just bought very sophisticated equipment because of the large number of Quebecers who are going for treatment to the United States. All this because the government decided, a few years ago, to cut transfers to provinces, including Quebec.

The shortfall for last year was \$1.7 billion, a tidy sum. Members can understand why the Government of Quebec found it so hard to achieve zero deficit while, at the same time, managing a health care system where demand is rising while funding is dropping.

We have to see how the government is feathering its nest, because that is just what it is doing. The Minister of Finance talked about a potential surplus of \$95 billion over five years, but according to our estimation it will be more like \$130 billion over the same period.

This surplus was accumulated by means of the Canada health and social transfer. The government has cut transfers to provinces, including Quebec, and by doing so it has created a terrible crisis for them. Waiting lists show how people are paying for this now.

We should not forget that the government is feathering its nest even more with the employment insurance fund. It still has ultimate control over the unemployed, limiting access to the employment insurance plan. Today, only four out of ten workers have access to the plan; before the reform it used to be seven out of ten. While the government is paying out less to the unemployed, it is still taking in just as much from employees and employers. Not only will it not upgrade the plan, it will not adjust it so that benefits are equivalent to the period worked.

The government is still feathering its nest, putting more money aside and, when it sees fit, it uses that money to encroach on areas

of provincial jurisdiction. I do not know whether the premiers of the other provinces are listening to us today, but I believe that with the signing of the social union such federal encroachments on provincial jurisdiction are going to increase.

I remind the House that Quebec did not sign this agreement, precisely to protect its jurisdiction over health care. Normally in Canada, under the Constitution, everything social is a provincial responsibility, but often things are called a different name.

For instance, with regard to the bill before us today, the name used is health research institutes; the government says it is not necessarily about health, but really about virtual research, or some other kind of research. There has been no consultation with the provinces. In fact, the amendments proposed by the Bloc Québécois are aimed at remedying this. We want the provinces and Quebec to be consulted.

What about the health research institutes? In 2001-2002, \$500 million will be invested in these institutes. When we look at how research and development are evolving in Canada, we see that we have big problems. When it comes to research and development in Canada, Quebec is at a disadvantage.

I often indicate that Quebecers represent 25% of the government's tax base. In the Outaouais region, let us not talk about institutes of health research but only about research centres; they are 43 of them, 42 on the Ottawa side, one of the Hull side. And yet, Quebecers foot 25% of the bill.

When it comes to research, we must also see all the economic benefits of a research centre, of an institute of health research. This is important. First, these are highly paid jobs; second, these research centres award a lot of contracts and subcontracts. A lot of people will be supplying the research centre, and that creates jobs. This is the new economy.

• (1125)

When we look at the way the money has been distributed for several years, even several decades, Quebec is always on the short end of the stick. I have the statistics with me. They prove that as far as research and development is concerned, Quebec receives only 14% of the money. We are paying 25%, but we are receiving only 14%. Is the same thing going to happen with the institutes of health research? Are we going to pay 25% of the bill and let Ontario reap the benefits? That is more or less how things stand, right now.

Is it Liberal ridings that are going to benefit from the institutes of health research? We know about the scandal at Human Resources Development Canada. Is the Liberal government not inclined to say "We have done all the necessary studies. First, it so happens that, in Quebec, you will not get 25% of the institutes. Second, those you will get will just happen to be in Liberal ridings"?

We might get two or three research institutes in Anjou—Rivière-des-Prairies. Unfortunately, as usual, Saint-Jean will end up empty-handed. These issues are a big concern to us.

Finally, the amendments put forward by the Bloc Québécois say two things: yes to research, because we think it is important, and no to interference in a provincial jurisdiction Quebec is proud of. I say hats off to the Government of Quebec. Mr. Landry just brought down an excellent budget. Finally, he is able to reinject money in health, and this is also due to the economy. If we had been in a recession, Mr. Landry would have had a hard time reinjecting money in the health system.

The federal government did not do it. Mr. Landry just reinjected in the health system 14 times more than the federal government; in the field of education, Mr. Landry just gave 7 times more than the federal government to education in Quebec.

It is important that Quebecers know these facts. Before the Government of Quebec's budget was brought down, I had said that the Minister of Finance's budget, here in Ottawa, came up short and gave nothing to Quebec, and that Quebecers should now get used to the idea that they have to rely on only one government as far as health and education are concerned, and that is the Government of Quebec.

The federal government has missed an opportunity to redress the severe injustices I was talking about earlier.

All this boils down to one single thing: encroachment, encroachment, encroachment. It is not too late to do the right thing. They only have to support the amendments put forward by the Bloc Québécois and say "Yes to research, we think it is important. However, we agree that this is under provincial jurisdiction, so we will consult the provinces".

This is roughly what the Bloc amendments are all about. We do not oppose the research aspect of it, for all the reasons I have just given. Within the federal system, we know that the government is the one that has the money, it collects the money from the taxpayers and never gives any of that money back. With it, it pays part of the debt, and by going half and half in new programs that encroach on provincial jurisdictions.

I do not think that this is the best way to manage money. We have always been against duplication, overlapping and encroachments. It would certainly be more cost effective to respect jurisdictions, to stop assigning an army of public servants to deal with matters that are already being dealt with by the other, to stop treading on each other's toes.

I urge my colleagues to vote in favour of the amendments put forward by the Bloc Québécois. To sum up, as I said earlier, we say yes to research, but no to encroachment.

Government Orders

Mr. Mac Harb (Ottawa Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with great concern that I heard my colleague talk about the distribution of funds in Canada. I would like to remind him of two things: equality and fairness.

• (1130)

It is very important to look at the way the government spends Canadian tax dollars in our society. Those two elements both have to be taken into account as a priority every time.

The issue of equality suggests that the Canadian government must treat all Canadians in the same way. In the case of the research institutes in the bill before the House, when the government starts hiring people to work in these institutes, it should try to find those people who have the most talent and who are best able to serve these organizations and Canadian interests, no matter where they live in the country.

It should not even be mentioned that one candidate is from Nova Scotia, another from the Lac Saint-Jean area, another from the Ottawa area or another from British Columbia. Each application should be judged on its own merit, and the person who is best qualified should be hired to do the job. All Canadians are equal before the law and they must be treated equally.

Earlier, my colleague touched on the subject of fairness. Of course, we have look at the regions of Canada where people need help from the government. For example, in the case of HRDC programs, people in certain ridings, such as mine, do not benefit from these programs. We did not ask the government for the riding of Ottawa Centre to get more money from DHRC because assistance was provided to some other riding in Quebec or British Columbia. I have no right to ask for that as a member of parliament, because I have to take into account the issue of equity.

In our region, the unemployment rate is under 10%. Therefore, we do not qualify. However, if some of my colleagues' ridings need these programs, it is the federal government's responsibility to help these ridings and regions.

My colleague knows very well that most of the ridings in the province of Quebec, for example, received much more money from Human Resources Development Canada than others in Ontario, because this government wants to ensure that every region that needs help and qualifies for it receives it.

We must always look at things objectively, not only in a subjective way. That is why I say that my colleague was wrong to say that this is how things should always be done, with a province that gives 25% of the taxes it collected to the federal government getting 25% of benefits. Unfortunately, it does not always work like that.

We would like it to work. We hope that, someday, in our society, every Canadian will have equal opportunities and equal responsi-

Government Orders

lities, which would mean having the same tax rates and the same level of service.

The way our Confederation works, the government takes from those who have and gives to those who have not. The federal government has a responsibility to act like a reasonable mother or father. When a region of Canada is in need, it is our responsibility to provide assistance.

• (1135)

I was a bit annoyed when my colleague said that here, in the capital region, there will be a research institute on the Ontario side and not on the Quebec side. I want to point out to my colleague that there is no discrimination in this region. There are often agencies located on either side of the river where people go to work, and these people are Canadians from Quebec or from Ontario.

It does not make any difference here, in this region. This region is a model for the rest of the country. This is the national capital region, where all people are equal before the law, where all people know full well that we have a model capital and a model centre, and that we are proud to be citizens of this capital.

Regardless of where the research institute will be located, whether on the other side or this side of the river—I would be delighted if it were located in Aylmer or Gatineau—but wherever it is located, what matters the most to us is to have such an institute and that it does the work we hope and trust it will do.

The other issue my colleague raised earlier is the jurisdiction issue. I am proud to say that this government is meeting these demands and needs to clarify the jurisdiction issue. I am told that one of my colleagues will meet this need to really clarify the jurisdiction issue. Later, we will dot the *is* and cross the *ts*, confirming that the provinces will continue to assume their jurisdictional responsibilities and the government should continue to do what it has been doing.

I say that this government listens and responds. I look forward to my colleague, the parliamentary secretary, to meet these needs.

Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to follow my colleague from the government party. The hon. member said that it is not always possible to get back 25% of the taxes contributed and he added that, in some cases, it can be pretty difficult.

When we look at the research centres in the Outaouais region, we see that the score is 43-0, that all the research centres are located in Ontario, and not one in the Outaouais region, none—the last one closed only three months ago. We get far less than 25% of what we pay in taxes in different areas under the jurisdiction of this government.

We should not digress too much from today's debate, which deals with the virtual research centres that would be created with a budget increase of \$500 million over three years. The Bloc Québécois is all in favour of this \$500 million investment and it supports the efforts made by researchers to develop a bill providing for the networking of universities, researchers and individuals concerned with health care.

This social issue forces us to satisfy the much more acute needs of an ageing population. For instance, because of new diseases, research must be at the leading edge in this area.

That is not the problem. Today, the Bloc Québécois proposed amendments to bill that would give the federal government powers over health matters. The federal government has a propensity to centralize, and to interfere in provincial jurisdictions.

• (1140)

The government has a tendency to reduce the Canada health and social transfer to the provinces and to invest in health, education and income security. This morning, we are dealing with health. All the provinces, Quebec included, have been short-changed.

For the Government of Quebec, the shortfall since 1993, when the government took office, stands at \$3.8 billion. This government has a tendency to reduce the financial assistance to the provinces, and this has put them in a bind in terms of the services they provide to the population.

We know that we have excellent researchers and research centres in Quebec and Canada. We are not questioning that. We know we have an international reputation. In Quebec, we have a reputation for cancer, mental health and genetic research.

It is essential that the procedures for the designation of the institutions take into consideration the strengths and expertise in provinces. We represent Quebec. It is essential that the provinces be there to assist their researchers and be involved in the designation of these institutes.

The bill, as worded, leaves a minimal role for the provinces. That are on the same standing as other stakeholders in the area of health. We have brought forward amendments that I think are reasonable and realistic. If the government wants to work with us, if it recognizes the jurisdiction of the provinces in that area and gives it priority, then it should just say so in the bill to show its willingness to recognize the provinces, but not with words like the ones we find in the preamble to this bill, which reads as follows:

Whereas Parliament recognizes the role of the provinces in health care and that the Government of Canada collaborates with provincial governments to support the health care system and health research;

Government Orders

We do not want the federal government to support the health care system. This preamble should talk about support for research. If we give the federal government responsibility for supporting the health care system, we know what that means. It means that it will interfere and play a centralizing role by imposing nationwide standards that will not take provincial priorities into account.

We know that some provinces have certain research and development priorities. Quebec may want to be a leader in certain types of research, and Ontario may want to favour other types of research.

It is always dangerous to want to impose standards that would cripple the ability of certain provinces to get grants. The wording of certain paragraphs is too diluted and undermines the importance of the provinces by putting them on an equal footing with other stakeholders.

The government wants to consult with the provinces and with persons and organizations, and not to consult in agreement with the provinces. This bill should fully involve the provinces in all the decisions made by the universities and the researchers. We might think today that we are doing a fine thing by passing Bill C-13, but in the long run, it could very well turn out to be detrimental to provincial jurisdiction over health.

The federal government is being called to order. Certain quotes are really based on social union, establishing that only provinces would be consulted. The government's will to recognize provincial jurisdiction over health has to go further than that.

This is what the Bloc Québécois really based its amendments on. The Bloc Québécois is not happy with the provinces' role in social services. I am sure that there are other opposition parties that are not happy with the wording of the bill either.

The preamble should have read as follows "Whereas Parliament recognizes the full jurisdiction of the provinces over health services" and not "recognizes the role of the provinces in health care". Their full jurisdiction has to be recognized and this is the purpose of one of the amendments moved by the Bloc Québécois.

• (1145)

If the federal government agrees with provincial jurisdictions, all it has to do is say so in this bill. It can show that it is willing to recognize provincial jurisdictions. We all know that the federal government is trying to nibble away at them. This is why we have seen the government withdraw huge amounts from the employment insurance fund, for example, gaining considerable financial leeway while reducing the provinces' financial leeway.

This is like treating the provinces like children. This will prevent them from responding to the urgent needs of the population in health, education and income security. These areas are much too

important to let the government have its way. If we let the provinces be weakened, they will not have enough money to allow their institutions to provide good service to the population, the day the federal government decided to stop supporting social measures and compassionate measures.

Quebec is often praised for its vision and for looking after all social policies. The leeway the provinces now have is very important for them. Our actions of today should not be viewed as a refusal to support research institutes.

The stakes are crucial for the future. We know that we are falling behind in health research and development funding and we recognize that the federal government has a role to play in that funding. We also recognize that the federal government wants to establish institutes, to set up networks between universities and scientists. However, we do not support the management role the federal government wants for itself. It is clear it wants to stick its nose in the provinces' business.

The former President of the Treasury Board said "When Bouchard, in Quebec City, has cut everywhere in social programs, health and education, we, in the federal government, will show the population how we care about the social security net. We will be the leaders in those areas".

What is happening is very harmful and, in the long run, parliament would be well advised to recognize the expectations contained in the amendments proposed by the Bloc.

[English]

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order to ask for the consent of the House to move my report stage Motion No. 56 with regard to Bill C-13. I regret that I was in committee at the time when Group No. 2 was called.

There have been consultations with all the parties to explain my mistake. There has also been consultations with regard to an amendment to this motion, which I understand will be tabled by the parliamentary secretary should the motion be put on the table. It has to do with the words the House, the Senate or both houses of parliament, et cetera. At this point I am simply asking for consent of the House to move Motion No. 56.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): The hon. member for Mississauga South has asked for unanimous consent of the House to move a motion. Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

• (1150)

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

Government Orders

Motion No. 56

That Bill C-13 be amended by adding after line 16 on page 14 the following new clause:

“32.1 (1) The administration of this Act shall be reviewed every five years by any committee of the House of Commons, of the Senate or of both Houses of Parliament as may be designated or established by Parliament for that purpose.

(2) The committee designated or established by Parliament for the purpose of subsection (1) shall undertake a comprehensive review of the provisions and operation of this Act and shall, within a reasonable time after the review is completed, submit a report to Parliament thereon including a statement of any changes the committee would recommend.”

Mrs. Sue Barnes (London West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to debate Bill C-13. I am from London West. London is a city that has many medical research centres, wonderful researchers and 22,000 people who work directly or indirectly in the health community.

We have to go back to basics. This legislation is about Canada in the 21st century, talking and learning about health. The Prime Minister said that we are in a global race where national vision is essential, where global thinking is a must. In a changing world where new health challenges are emerging we have to do more than just keeping pace. Canadians must lead in the global knowledge economy, in the marketplace of ideas. This is about ideas concerning health and the value for Canadians. Health research is an area where Canada can not only do its work but can excel at its work, provided the conditions are right to cultivate the strengths in this area.

Historically Canadians have done very well. They are in the forefront of health discoveries and advances throughout the world. I remind the House that Canadian research generates more scholarly citations per dollar spent than that of any other country in the world. Canadian research ranks fourth in the world in terms of academic publications per capita ahead of both the United Kingdom and surprisingly the United States.

Canadians have broken new ground, creating the kind of knowledge and understanding that has improved the health and well-being of people the world over. In other words, there are no geographic boundaries when we discover things and we share them with those who need to have this understanding.

Groundbreaking work has been done by the likes of Nobel laureate Dr. Michael Smith in the field of genetics, on the anti-cancer drug of Dr. Charles Thomas Beer, and by the new generation of geneticists and biotech pioneers. This is but a few of the researchers who have put Canada on the health research map. They are numerous in my riding. I would like to name them all but that would be unfair because I would probably leave out some young new researcher whom we are trying to attract and let flourish in the country.

Canada stands in the forefront of the development of new research approaches which examine areas of complex less obvious factors that determine health. We are indebted to the pioneers like

doctors Evans, Hertzman and Stoddart for their work in identifying why some populations have a lower incidence of disease, regardless of their access to medical care.

Every day in Canada researchers are at work in our communities, universities, hospitals and research labs taking on diverse challenges. Every day we fight disease and help unlock the mysteries of health. Every day we are working to help Canadians keep healthy and ensuring that when they need care it is delivered in the best possible way thanks to innovative methodologies and approaches in health services and research that improve our health care system. The government applauds this as I am sure all opposition members do.

Through the creation of the CIHR and the substantial new investments in health research we want to ensure that Canadian research talent has the necessary tools to be among the top tier in the world.

• (1155)

It is impossible to speak about what the CIHR will do and how it will do it without acknowledging the stellar work that has been done by members of the interim governing council. In an extremely short period of time they have brought together the entire health research community across the country to put forward the vision that is embodied in the CIHR.

In guiding and shaping this initiative they have ensured that the CIHR is an organization in which all health researchers feel they have a stake and in which all researchers feel that their views have been taken into consideration. They applied and will continue to apply the same standards of excellence to the creation of the CIHR as they have toward their own research that has always been peer reviewed. It is a considerable accomplishment and one that deserves our appreciation.

The CIHR will literally change the way we fund and organize health research in Canada. It has virtual institutes and CIHR will focus on the critical health issues affecting Canadians. CIHR institutes will identify specific research themes or areas of focus, attracting the brightest research minds in Canada to work together in various communities to address specific health research priorities and gain new knowledge.

These virtual networks will link our researchers, our research funders and research users with their colleagues in different institutions, different disciplines and different areas of the country. It is not a parochial vision. It is one on which we are united across the country. Institutes will be the key mechanism by which the CIHR engages some of the most creative minds in Canada to address the specific health research priorities of Canadians and to improve understanding and knowledge. Each institute will have a separate advisory board, giving people an opportunity to help shape the research agenda and priorities.

Second, CIHR will unite the four themes of health research. I would like to review these areas: biomedical research, clinical research, research in health systems and services, and research into the determinants of health which have for too long operated in isolation in their separate spheres, depriving us of the benefits that come from collaboration and the shared approach we get with common problems and common initiatives.

Bringing all areas of health research together in this way will result in a multi-disciplinary approach to health issues. Researchers from each area will work with their colleagues from other areas, sharing ideas and insights on a regular basis. The very perspectives to which they are exposed will strengthen the work of researchers in all disciplines.

CIHR will now break down the old barriers and open up new opportunities. The result will be an accelerated discovery of cures and treatments and a deeper understanding of the complex factors which influence health. This integration will help ensure that we are receiving the best possible value for health care dollars. More research dollars spent more effectively is the pledge of the government.

The third difference that the CIHR is about is the breadth of its mandate. One of the objectives of the CIHR sets out explicitly in its mandate not only to fund excellent research but to ensure that the knowledge gained as a result of this research is shared widely, adopted and applied. Research knowledge will be translated more directly into better health care and better health products with the ultimate achievement being improved better health of Canadians. Who could argue with that?

CIHR will also help to ensure that the health and economic benefits of Canadian research are realized right here in Canada. In the past Canadian researchers have watched as the world class knowledge and insight generated in this country with our brains and talent have been taken up and developed into useful products and services by companies elsewhere. When we take the research process one step further the rewards will be clear: faster access to new treatment and products for Canadians, more jobs, and greater economic growth for Canada.

Achieving these goals requires significant and sustained investment. This is happening. The government is nearly doubling its contribution to health research over the next two years for a total budget of nearly \$500 million. In October the Minister of Health announced \$65 million for the first year of CIHR programs. This response has been positive but the kind of creative collaborative research proposals that are being put forward, proposals that would not have been possible before CIHR, demonstrate that the capacity exists to do much more.

• (1200)

The fourth reason that CIHR will make such a large difference is that it will be a catalyst for change, improving not only the funding

Government Orders

but also the management of the research process in this country. In simple terms this means better co-ordination and a more effective use of research resources.

Given our complexity today, the complexity of those who do the research, those who fund it and those who use the results, this move toward greater co-ordination and I must emphasize co-operation, is fundamental. It is a major step forward. It will facilitate new partnerships and provide greater opportunity for the voluntary sector and other health partners to have a say in identifying and meeting the health priorities of Canadians.

CIHR will build on our strength in the knowledge economy and contribute to the overall goal of enabling Canadians to succeed in the marketplace of ideas. It will provide a strong ethical framework for health research in Canada. Ethics committees will help develop the standards and procedures to ensure that the interests of the most vulnerable are protected while funded research will examine new and emerging ethical considerations and issues. These are important to Canadians and cannot be underestimated.

The next step is getting this legislation going including getting through all these amendments. I know there are other members who wish to comment on these amendments and perhaps adjust them.

I believe that people in my riding and people across Canada will benefit. We need the viewpoints of all stakeholders and members of the public. We need all of their co-operation and hard work.

I want to thank all members of the House who have worked toward this goal. We have all worked very hard to do this.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Charbonneau (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I too would like to thank the members of the House of Commons for their hard work on this bill.

Including the time the standing committee spent reviewing this very important bill, we have spent over 50 hours on it. During this time we were able to improve the bill in several respects, and through the work we are doing now, and the second group of amendments, we will improve it even further.

I would like to take a few minutes to talk about the amendments in the second group and, in particular, move two amendments, on behalf of the government, which are in keeping with the concerns expressed by several opposition members, including members from the Bloc Québécois.

The Bloc members have stressed that the provinces have primary responsibility for health care and have insisted that it be made clear in the bill. We believe it was already very clear, but there are ways to improve on it as suggested.

Government Orders

Motion No.4, the amendment before us, will help reinforce the bill in terms of respecting or taking into account provincial responsibilities over health. This motion will amend the preamble to the bill. By virtue of being at the beginning of the bill, the amendment encompasses the whole bill and we will not have to pass 25 further amendments, since it will be made clear right from the beginning.

With this amendment, we say explicitly that:

—Parliament recognizes that the provinces are responsible for the delivery of health care to Canadians—

It could not be clearer. Moreover “that the Government of Canada collaborates with provincial governments to support the health care system and health research”. This explicitly and clearly recognizes the role of the provinces in this area.

Not only are we moving this first amendment, but we are adding a second one, to clause 4, which deals with the mission of the institutes. This amendment, Motion No. 16, answers the concerns of several members.

• (1205)

We are saying that, to meet their objective of using research results to improve health and health services, the institutes will have to work in collaboration with the provincial governments, which are responsible for the delivery of health care to Canadians.

We are adding a new paragraph to make a clear distinction between the responsibility of the provinces and the collaboration that we will also have to get from voluntary organizations and the private sector, since it was an issue of concern for our colleagues opposite. They said that voluntary organizations and the provinces were all on an equal footing. We have rewritten that clause to make it very clear that the jurisdiction of the provinces will be recognized, with all that entails, and that there will also be some collaboration with the private sector and voluntary groups.

It seems to me that these two amendments address the concerns we heard from the other side of the House. I would also like to make a few comments on certain amendments brought forward by the opposition.

Before I get into that, since it is often said that the provinces were not consulted, I would like to mention the fact that the interim governing council that made the recommendations that led to Bill C-13 included three high calibre provincial representatives, namely Jeffrey Lozon, the Ontario deputy minister of health, Dr. Matthew Spence, from the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research, and, from Quebec, a distinguished researcher who is at the forefront of everything that has to do with health research, Dr. Michel Bureau, executive director of the Fonds de la recherche en santé du Québec. So the provinces' point of view was integrated into the whole process.

I would like to talk about certain other amendments brought forward by the opposition. Some of them tend to restrict the scope of the research to be conducted by the institutes. Some amendments say that it should be restricted to medical research. For this bill, the government's view is that the institutes will be involved in health research in general, in all aspects of that field, and not be restricted to the medical aspects.

There are also amendments dealing with the appointment processes for both the president and the members of the advisory boards. These processes were explained many times. There was very broad consultation and public notices were posted regarding the appointments to be made, whether for the presidents or the members of the advisory boards.

Amendments were proposed regarding the president's mandate. We feel that a five year mandate is appropriate and we see no reason to change that provision. We also think that the president must be appointed at pleasure, which allows the minister and the government to review the appointment. This is standard procedure for governor in council appointments.

Other amendments had to do with accountability, either that of the president or that of the advisory boards. We think the bill is already clear enough regarding the relation between the CEO and the department or the Minister of Health. Each year, the Minister of Health and the Standing Committee on Health will receive a report from the institute, through its president. Committee members will be able to ask questions and to recommend to the minister and, therefore, to the institute, any change that may be important. Consequently, we do not need the proposed amendments, because they do not add anything to the substance of the bill.

I will conclude by proposing an amendment to the motion tabled by the hon. member for Mississauga South. Our colleague has just moved an motion calling for the act establishing the institutes to be reviewed, to be re-examined by parliament every five years. I would like to move that parliament review the act once, after five years.

The intent of my colleague's motion was for the review to take place every five years, and the intent of the amendment is for it to take place only once, at the end of the first five year period.

• (1210)

[English]

I move:

That Motion No. 56 be amended as follows:

By replacing all of the words after the word “reviewed” with the following:

“after five years by Parliament.”

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

I believe that, with these amendments, the government is showing that it is totally attuned to the key concerns of our colleagues in the opposition, and to those of certain colleagues on the government side as well.

We believe that it is appropriate to review this legislation at least once, after five years, so that we may be really comfortable with the way the research institutes will operate subsequently.

We understand that it may take five years for learning and working out the kinks, and that a review may be required. Thereafter, there will be the annual reports, which may offer an opportunity for discussions and exchanges of views with all members of this House who are on the Standing Committee on Health.

As for our first amendments, I believe they focus attention on a very significant effort to honour the provincial governments, to appreciate their contribution and collaboration and the research efforts carried out in each province, but also to try to properly preserve the general co-ordinating role assigned to the institutes.

Mr. Réal Ménard: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. So that I have this clear, earlier we gave our unanimous consent to allow a colleague who was not in the House to move a motion. We were told that this motion essentially had to do with a review that would be done by the House of Commons.

As I understand his amendment, the parliamentary secretary wants to include both the House of Commons and the Senate, because he mentions parliament. Is that the government's intention—to have the amendment moved by a member who was not present and to which we gave our consent a few moments ago cover not just the House of Commons but the Senate? Will the parliamentary secretary tell me whether my understanding of his amendment is correct?

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): Just so that everybody is certain of what has taken place here, first the parliamentary secretary has moved an amendment to motion before the House. As such it is not required to have the unanimous consent of the House to move the amendment.

I will try to explain the effect of the amendment on Motion No. 56, as I understand it.

[*Translation*]

Motion No. 56 provides that Bill C-13 be amended by adding a new clause whereby the act would be reviewed by a committee every five years.

The amendment provides that parliament review the act after five years.

• (1215)

[*English*]

Mr. Greg Thompson: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. This is trickery of the worst kind. The member who moved the original motion came into the House on bended knee asking for our indulgence to allow him to move this amendment. Just hear me out, Mr. Speaker. I think other members will agree with me.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): No. The point of point of order has to relate to the procedural relevance of what we have done, not the content. We are not going to get into debate on the content.

Mr. Greg Thompson: Mr. Speaker, you are going to get this side of the House in an agitated state simply because the procedure that they used was trickery of the worst kind, because we consented to the motion not knowing that there was going to be an amendment. They were not honest enough to tell us that they were going to put an amendment to the motion. The members were not here. They have to be present in the House. That is the procedure. They were not here because the government has them out scurrying around doing numerous tasks—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): What has transpired has transpired. If the members did not want to provide the opportunity earlier for that amendment to be put, the House had the opportunity at that time to deny unanimous consent.

Once that has been done, it has been done. It is not for the Chair to get involved now. What has been done has been done.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Réal Ménard: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Without wishing to challenge your ruling, which are generally very well reasoned, I simply wish to ensure that we have a clear understanding of what is going on.

We gave our consent to an amendment moved by a colleague who was not here—and we admit that this can happen, we all have many obligations—and who wanted the act reviewed every five years by the House of Commons, and I repeat by the House of Commons, the House in which we are sitting.

We gave our consent on that understanding. This is important, because the parliamentary secretary wants to make an amendment—which he is entitled to do—but he wants to change the content.

*Government Orders**[English]*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): I understand, but it is not the role of the Chair to get involved in these negotiations. If there are to be subsequent negotiations, then they need to be done by members behind the curtains. It is not up to the Chair. All the Chair can do is present motions. It is up to the House to accept them or not to accept them. The House accepted them. What has been done has been done.

Mrs. Sue Barnes: Mr. Speaker, if I might help to clarify things, the only reason I seconded the motion was to get the mechanism to get to the amendment put just now by the government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): All right. We will not get into debate on this. I will hear one more point of order from the hon. member for Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Mac Harb: Mr. Speaker, I am sure my colleague from New Brunswick did not mean to say what he said in the House earlier. He used unparliamentary language, which he knows as an experienced member of the House he should not have used. He used the word—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Gerald Keddy: That is exactly what it was.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): I would invite members to come—

• (1220)

Mr. Lynn Myers: Throw him out.

Mr. Mac Harb: He used the word dishonest.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): There will be one person on their feet at one time, and that will be the Chair. I invite the hon. member for Ottawa Centre to retake his seat. Any members who wish to have further clarification, I invite them to see the table officers for a detailed rundown on this particular bill.

Mr. Greg Thompson: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would suggest, because I believe that it was trickery used by the government to get this matter—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): We have gone down this road twice. We are not going down it again.

[Translation]

Mr. Réal Ménard: Mr. Speaker, I simply want to make sure that—

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): The hon. member for Hochelaga—Maisonneuve has already been on his feet to speak to this group.

We will take one second to check to make sure that it is acceptable for the hon. member for Hochelaga—Maisonneuve to speak.

The hon. member for Hochelaga—Maisonneuve has already spoken to this group. This amendment is part of that group and, therefore, the hon. member for Hochelaga—Maisonneuve will not be on his feet again for this particular group.

[Translation]

Mr. Réal Ménard: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am sure that the parliamentary secretary and hon. members will give their unanimous consent to allow me to address this amendment.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): The hon. member for Hochelaga—Maisonneuve has asked for the unanimous consent of the House to speak again to this motion. Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Greg Thompson: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. That amendment was not in the group of amendments we were speaking to. We did not have an opportunity to speak to it. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I think your ruling in terms of a member speaking twice to that grouping has to change, because that amendment was not before us. I think if you asked the table officers they would be in agreement.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): I thank the hon. member very much for his intervention. I had the advice of the table officers prior to making that particular ruling and I can see that they are busy poring through the books once again. If there is a revision, I will be happy to advise the House.

I do not need any more help from the hon. member for New Brunswick Southwest. Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): Then somebody needs to stand to speak on debate.

Mr. Greg Thompson: Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that we recess for five minutes to sort this out, because we have to get legal advice on where we stand on this issue. I think because the government used some trickery to bring this motion we are entitled to at least five minutes.

Government Orders

Mr. Lynn Myers: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I have listened for some minutes now to what hon. members have been saying, and it seems to me that you have made a ruling, and it seems to me that we should stick by it. It also seems to me that we should proceed. We have had enough talk from opposition members about trickery and other things, and now it is time to proceed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): I really want to thank all members for their interventions. Now we are on debate.

• (1225)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Ghislain Lebel (Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I had the pleasure of addressing Bill C-13 before and my friend, the hon. member for Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, was quite pleased to see that even though the riding of Chambly, which I represent here, does not have research institutes as such, it may have some one day.

In Chambly, as elsewhere, we have skilled people. In particular, we have pharmaceutical institutes and companies, and this, of course, is of interest to our constituents.

I was listening to government and opposition members. Those who care about scientific research are pleased, in a way, to see that, at last, the federal government—

Mr. Michel Gauthier: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. An event has just happened in the House so serious I dare not describe it, but which I would like to bring to your attention.

Parliament works marvelously well when members, House leaders, and politicians on all sides of the House come to an agreement behind the curtain so that things run as smoothly as possible in the House. This always involves giving our words as individuals and parliamentarians.

Earlier today, the member for Mississauga South—after we refused to give consent to table a motion—came to my office to discuss the problem. I told him we could not give consent unless the motion provided that only the House of Commons could be on the reviewing committee.

He agreed, we struck a deal and he gave me his word he would amend his motion so that it would be acceptable to us. We came to the House and we gave our consent to a motion amended as per the member's word.

Only minutes after we gave consent, the member amended his motion back to the original motion. This, Mr. Speaker, is a very serious breach of parliamentary usage. An agreement between two members, two men, to obtain consent under false pretence is not only contrary to the rules, it shows contempt.

It is extremely serious and I hope that, if the member does not amend his motion, we can withdraw our consent. One should not mislead a political party by asking for unanimous consent and then amending the motion later. This is just not done, it never was, and we cannot accept it. I call on your judgement, and the government's fair play. The House cannot operate that way.

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): This is a very serious consideration. I will recognize the parliamentary secretary in a moment.

• (1230)

I have been advised by the table once again that there could be a good deal of confusion in the problem we have. I would invite members to approach the table for clarification. In the opinion of the table, the members who are upset have no reason to be upset because what they are upset about has not in fact happened. I would invite members to double check with the table to ensure that we are concerned about something that is real.

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I want to apologize to the members of the Bloc Québécois. I have made a serious mistake this day.

As members know, backbenchers have an opportunity through report stage motions to try to influence legislation. Motion No. 56 in my name basically calls for a five year review of this legislation so parliament could be involved. That is in fact the original motion.

This morning when Group 2 was called, I was not in the House. I was at finance committee and unfortunately I made the mistake of not asking one of my colleagues to move my Motion No. 56 as it was on the order paper. I was contacted and immediately came to the House. I was told that to get my motion properly on the floor, I would have to seek unanimous consent of all parties of the House.

In an attempt to speak with all parties, I met with the House leader of the Bloc Québécois with my request. The party members came back with a request that I would agree to amend Motion No. 56. I agreed to do this and I came back to the House. But I am also advised that I cannot amend my own motion. All I can do is table Motion No. 56 and the Bloc accept it in accordance with our understanding that it would get unanimous consent to be put on the table, subject to and as I said in my comments, amendments that would be tabled by another member and be in order.

I discussed this and I made these arrangements and provided the information to the parliamentary secretary to pose such amendments which I could not make myself. I came to the House and I made the motion. The Bloc and other members gave me their consent to move Motion No. 56 as it is on the order paper. In between this time what happened—and I have no control over it—the government refused to support the amendment I had agreed upon with the Bloc and I could not deliver.

Government Orders

The Bloc members who have spoken on this and the member from the Conservative Party are quite correct. This is not the proper way for business to be handled in the House. I apologize sincerely for upsetting the House with this matter. I would ask now for the unanimous consent of the House to withdraw Motion No. 56.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): What is before the House is the amendment. There would first have to be a request to remove the amendment before the motion could be removed.

• (1235)

Mr. Greg Thompson: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I will read from *Beauchesne's* 6th edition, pages 177 to 178:

A member, having proposed an amendment, and subsequently desiring to amend the same can do so only if the House allows the original amendment to be withdrawn, at which time the member may then propose a new amendment. It has been long accepted that government motions may be moved by any member of the Ministry.

Preceding this, I want to get into *Beauchesne's* again regarding the form and content of amendments and subamendments because this does get pretty ticklish in terms of what the government attempted to do. The subamendment is where I think the government got derailed in terms of its abuse of the rules. It says that a subamendment cannot be moved if it proposes to leave out all the words of the proposed amendment.

That is up to the House, or the Chair, to decide. They are referring to *Journals* March 8, 1937, page 208; *Journals* November 29, 1944, page 934; *Journals* March 14, 1947, page 198.

Second, a subamendment must be relevant to the amendment it purports to amend, and not to the main motion, referring to *Journals* January 18, 1973, page 49.

Third, further on it points out that a subamendment which proposes an alternative to the original amendment is in order provided it is relevant to the question, which I believe this is not, referring to *Journals* June 23 and 24, 1926, pages 465, 468.

Fourth, when the House has negated a subamendment to strike out certain other words in a proposed amendment, it is in order to move another subamendment to insert other words than those used in the original subamendment, referring to *Debates* June 19, 1925, page 4554.

And on and on we go. I will now go back to page 178 in the 6th edition of *Beauchesne's*, regarding withdrawal of motions and amendments. I will go through this step by step, clause by clause. I think we have a case for this one. Just bear with me.

The member who has proposed a motion may withdraw it only with the unanimous consent of the House.

We touched on that.

An amendment may be withdrawn with the unanimous consent of the House, but neither a motion nor an amendment can be withdrawn with the—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): I realize that the hon. member is in full flight but the Chair is privileged to have the advice of the best parliamentary minds our country has to offer.

Having made use of that advice, I am going to suggest that in this particular case that Motion No. 56 was properly introduced, properly presented and properly accepted.

An hon. member: In good faith.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): I am not talking about anything other than the fact of whether it was done properly procedurally.

The subsequent amendment was properly moved. If it is the desire of the House that Motion No. 56 should be withdrawn, and the amendment, then it would be in order for someone to make that motion. It is not possible for the Chair to move it. It has to come from the House itself.

Ms. Marlene Catterall: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am always willing to do the will of the House if that can be discerned. If it is the will of the House, I would move in fact that you seek unanimous consent that both the motion and the amendment be withdrawn.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): The hon. the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader has sought the unanimous consent of the House to withdraw Motion No. 56 and the subsequent amendment.

Does the hon. member have unanimous consent of the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion and amendment withdrawn)

• (1240)

[Translation]

Mr. Ghislain Lebel: Mr. Speaker, one can easily get lost in this kind of debate. I do not know exactly where I was when you interrupted me.

Government Orders

My colleague from Hochelaga—Maisonnette tells me that I was talking about the fact that there is pharmaceutical research being done in Chambly. There is also the space centre in Saint-Hubert, just a few kilometres from the beautiful riding of Chambly. Some people who work there live in my riding. At this time of year, with the Richelieu River thawing out and the Canadian geese flying across the area, Chambly is probably the most beautiful riding in Canada.

An hon. member: After Rivière-des-Mille-Îles.

Mr. Ghislain Lebel: After the riding of Rivière-des-Mille-Îles represented by my colleague to my right, and maybe also after the riding of my friend from Châteauguay. In any event, it is one of the most beautiful ridings in Canada and I take this opportunity to salute all those who live there.

Mr. Yvon Godin: There is also Acadie—Bathurst.

Mr. Ghislain Lebel: I hear the member for Acadie—Bathurst who would like me to mention his riding, which I have visited and which is indeed very beautiful.

We are talking about scientific research. We are talking about clarity and about good faith among parliamentarians just after an intervention where the leaders of all parties recognized that keeping one's word is sacred, including in parliamentary law.

We know the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, who never stops talking about good faith, kindness, friendship and compassion like the constitutional good guy that he is. On this side, we cannot adhere totally and without reservation to what is in the bill.

This bill is good for scientific research, but what worries the opposition is that, once again, the very same thing that happened with Atomic Energy of Canada, where development was done in Ontario, could very well happen again. Atomic Energy of Canada represents a \$12 billion investment over the years. When it was noticed that there was a small head office in Montreal, it was quickly moved to Ontario a few years ago, because it was no longer appropriate to leave it where it was. The head office was in Montreal, but the activities of Atomic Energy of Canada were conducted exclusively in Ontario.

This has happened time and time again. For instance, Ontario got the lion's share of the automobile industry among others. We understandably have concerns about Bill C-13.

Mr. Speaker, you are frowning at me. I hope there is nothing unparliamentary in saying that we are concerned that once again the spinoffs of the act will benefit Ontario.

An hon. member: He just said it makes sense.

Mr. Ghislain Lebel: I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for listening to me with interest.

This is what worries parliamentarians. We know no modern country can make progress without helping scientific research. The member for Chicoutimi, whom I salute, is nodding in agreement; he knows that, in his riding as in ours, there are bright minds. But the private sector cannot always be there for them, because it takes equipment, infrastructures and money. "No money, no candy", as our friends in Ontario say, and "no fun".

We are welcoming this initiative to spread scientific research across the country instead of building a huge structure at some street corner, in Hamilton or Toronto, where scientific research would be concentrated.

• (1245)

Thanks to modern means of communication such as Internet, scientific research in a given field could be done by someone in Chicoutimi who would be connected to colleagues in Calgary, Mississauga or, of course, Chambly. Scientists could work and collaborate from their homes or their offices in the regions.

The strength of this bill, if it is implemented properly, is in networking. But if everything is in Toronto, if all the lines and wires are converging on Toronto, the bill will have a negative impact on the other provinces.

Research is important. We can focus our economic development according to our skills and expertise. That is the problem for all regions, except Ontario. In Canada, and this is a major mistake that was repeated thousands of times, economic development is invariably based on technical knowledge and expertise. If that expertise is concentrated in one area, the resulting economic development will benefit that specific area.

This is why, in the past, research on the seabed, marine species or fishery resources was conducted in the maritime provinces. Regional economy was based on the skills and knowledge that existed in a given region. The same research could not have been conducted in the central provinces, where agriculture is predominant.

When research is not based on raw materials, but on technical knowledge such as the breaking of the atom—

An hon. member: The breaking of the Liberals.

Mr. Ghislain Lebel: Or the breaking of the Liberals.

In that case, economic development can be promoted on the basis of that research. This is what concerns me, and rightly so.

I learned a long time ago that, on the Liberal side, everything that shines is not gold. For the Liberals, chairs do not always have four identical legs. When they tell me about a chair, I have learned to be suspicious, because it does not mean there is an horizontal seat and a vertical back. In the Liberals' mind, a chair is not at all what you are sitting on, Mr. Speaker, so be careful. The Prime Minister has spent his life, his entire career, playing with words, concepts, and principles.

Government Orders

Yes, we are pleased about Bill C-13. But, for heavens sake, do not use it as an opportunity to once again fool about 80% of Canadians.

[English]

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today we are dealing with Bill C-13, an act to establish the Canadian institutes of health research.

As a member of the health committee, I listened intently to the witnesses and to their observations and recommendations. I am pleased to report to the House that the overwhelming consensus was in support of establishing the Canadian institutes of health research.

There were many witnesses with regard to lobbying, as it were, for hopefully consideration to become one of these institutes, which is the responsibility of the executive body of the new institute.

There were, however, other concerns raised. I know that all members were aware that accountability was a very significant issue with regard to the new Canadian institutes of health research. The Canadian Nurses Association and the Canadian Medical Association suggested that parliament was establishing these Canadian institutes for health research and not providing, within the legislation, any mechanism for review other than a review of the public accounts and the overall report of the auditor general.

• (1250)

The new Canadian institutes for health research will ultimately involve the appropriation and spending of some \$500 million each and every year compared to about \$250 million currently appropriated to the Medical Research Council, which currently discharges these responsibilities.

In my view, the representations made by the CMA, the CNA and many other groups were that transparency and accountability were issues that this place should take very seriously. Their recommendations were that this legislation and, more importantly, the administration of this new body called the Canadian institutes for health research, should be subject to a five year review by parliament.

I proposed report stage Motion No. 56. It was to reflect the testimony of witnesses who were dealing with the issues of accountability and transparency with regard to this piece of legislation and particularly the administration of \$500 million of taxpayer money with regard to a most important area of health research.

Through my own error, for which I have apologized to the House, Motion No. 56 is no longer on the table. However, I believe that the House would agree that the principles of transparency and accountability are paramount for parliamentarians and that a five year review, after the enactment of this particular bill, would be

appropriate so that we could see how we did in crafting a new agency, a new organization and then to determine whether there were any modifications necessary. With guidance from parliamentarians, from the witnesses that we would call and with input from Canadians, we would be able to determine whether it was doing the job that we wanted it to do.

I want to propose an amendment to Group No. 2, Motion No. 55 which concerns clause 31 of the bill. The motion I propose is that at the end of existing clause 31 of Bill C-13, the following sentence be added: That parliament shall also conduct a review of the administration of the act after five years and submit a report to parliament thereon, including a statement of any changes parliament would recommend.

• (1255)

The Speaker: I would judge that the amendment put forward by the member for Mississauga South to Motion No. 55, as stated here, is not in order because it changes what this motion was set up for. I reject the amendment. The member still has three minutes for debate.

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, I certainly do understand the ruling of the Chair but I will be seeking support from the House to find a way in which we can incorporate into this bill a review by parliament.

I believe the House concurs with the importance of transparency and accountability. When the expenditure of \$500 million of funds is involved, it is important that parliament have an opportunity, at least after the first five years, to see whether or not the legislation and the institution we are establishing are achieving the objectives that parliament intended. It is our only opportunity to check and to influence whether or not a brand new agency is doing what parliament had intended.

If we do not have this mechanism, parliament is seconding to third parties, just like it did with the Medical Research Council, the full authority to spend \$500 million.

I would therefore ask for the unanimous consent of the House, for the second time today, to move that my original report stage Motion No. 56 which asks for a parliamentary review.

The Speaker: The hon. member is asking for unanimous consent of the House. Does the hon. member have permission to put the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Greg Thompson: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. In relation to the member's request and in reading from Beauchesne's, there will be an opportunity, based on the rules of the House, to put an amendment at third reading. I hope the member considers that. I guess I do not have to quote from Beauchesne's in this regard, but I think on page 214 he will find the solution to his problem.

Government Orders

The Speaker: No doubt the hon. member will thank the member for New Brunswick Southwest if indeed the information is helpful to him. At this point, I have not been asked to make any ruling on that. Therefore, as far as I am concerned, we are still in debate and we are still on Group No. 2. If there is no further debate, is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

• (1300)

The Speaker: The question is on Motion No. 2. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Speaker: The recorded division on Motion No. 2 stands deferred.

The next question is on Motion No. 8. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Speaker: The recorded division on Motion No. 8 stands deferred. The recorded division will also apply to Motions Nos. 27, 31, 32, 34, 45 and 47.

The next question is on Motion No. 10. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Speaker: The recorded division on Motion No. 10 stands deferred.

The next question is on Motion No. 15. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Speaker: The recorded division on Motion No. 15 stands deferred.

The next question is on Motion No. 16. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Speaker: The recorded division on Motion No. 16 stands deferred.

The next question is on Motion No. 19. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

Government Orders

The Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Speaker: The recorded division on Motion No. 19 stands deferred.

The next question is on Motion No. 22.

• (1305)

[*Translation*]

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Speaker: The recorded division on Motion No. 22 stands deferred.

[*English*]

The next question is on Motion No. 25. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Speaker: The recorded division on Motion No. 25 stands deferred.

The next question is on Motion No. 29. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Speaker: The recorded division on Motion No. 29 stands deferred.

The next question is on Motion No. 36. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Speaker: The recorded division on Motion No. 36 stands deferred.

The next question is on Motion No. 41. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Speaker: The recorded division on Motion No. 41 stands deferred.

The next question is on Motion No. 42. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Speaker: The recorded division on Motion No. 42 stands deferred.

The next question is on Motion No. 51. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Government Orders

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Speaker: The recorded division on Motion No. 51 stands deferred.

The next question is on Motion No. 52. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Speaker: The recorded division on Motion No. 52 stands deferred.

The next question is on Motion No. 55. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

• (1310)

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Speaker: The recorded division on Motion No. 55 stands deferred.

The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded divisions at the report stage of the bill. Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

Ms. Marlene Catterall: Mr. Speaker, would you please defer the votes.

The Speaker: As requested, the votes are deferred until Monday, March 27, at the end of Government Orders.

* * *

[Translation]

CITIZENSHIP OF CANADA ACT

The House resumed from February 18 consideration of the motion that Bill C-16, an act respecting Canadian citizenship, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the last time I rose in the House to speak to Bill C-16, it was a rather short intervention. I barely had the time to outline the main elements of my speech; I was supposed to have some 40 minutes but had a mere two minutes.

It is with great pleasure that I take part today in this debate on Bill C-16, the Citizenship of Canada Act, which all the members have had the opportunity to look at. It is about 40 pages long and is designed to replace the existing Citizenship Act.

Members will recall that the House studied this bill once before, as it is a carbon copy, so to speak, of earlier Bill C-63. That bill had been tabled in the House and had gone to committee. This morning, we had the opportunity to discuss that at the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration. It was mentioned that, when the earlier bill was considered, more than thirty individuals, organizations and experts had testified before the committee to express their concerns with regard to the Citizenship Act.

That earlier bill having died on the order paper, the government has now introduced a new bill, Bill C-16, to replace the existing Citizenship Act. I will describe this bill as simply and as succinctly as possible, giving a brief historical overview of citizenship in Canada, and then moving to the changes proposed in Bill C-16.

Later, I will explain the Bloc Québécois vision with regard to the concept of citizenship, which can be both legal and civic.

I will then talk about a number of amendments, one in particular from my colleague from Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, who was the citizenship and immigration critic at the time Bill C-63 was being studied.

In my opinion, my colleague presented a constructive amendment at report stage, which made it possible to improve Bill C-63 on citizenship.

• (1315)

Those amendments had the support of a number of individuals and organizations. I will address the amendments made by my colleague from Hochelaga—Maisonneuve shortly. It is my intention to do so because they are of interest and of considerable importance to a number of different groups.

Government Orders

The concept of citizenship may have a connotation and a definition that are purely legalistic. Naturally, the legal concept of citizenship confers certain rights and responsibilities. These responsibilities and rights are civic in nature, but they are also political and to some extent social. There is also the aspect of responsibilities.

Bill C-16 replaces Bill C-63, which died on the order paper. It has a lot of history attached to it. Hon. members must keep in mind that, prior to 1947, not just anyone could become a Canadian citizen. One had to be a British subject. That is hard to imagine now, but I think that some of my colleagues who will be taking part in this debate will address this aspect.

Before 1947, a person could be Canadian provided he were a British subject. We had to wait until 1977 for the Citizenship Act as we now know it to come into effect. The 1977 statute, which still applies, was aimed at encouraging this citizenship, at making it more accessible in a number of ways. There are three or four elements characterizing the 1977 legislation.

The first one was that it reduced from five to three the number of years of residency. This is an important element. It eliminated the discrimination between men and women when adopting a child born abroad.

The act introduced a new concept: dual citizenship. From then on, people could have dual citizenship. The 1977 act was aimed at making it easier to become a Canadian citizen.

The bill before us today—for all intents and purposes and as surprising as it may seem—is the first review of the Citizenship Act we, as parliamentarians, have the opportunity to vote on.

Since 1977, apart from a few statements from subsequent ministers—in particular the member for Westmount, who, during her previous mandate, made various statements—it is the first time parliamentarians are called upon to vote on an in-depth review of the Citizenship Act.

I would like to highlight a few of the changes to the existing legislation. One clause of Bill C-16 deals with the issue of birth in Canada. Technically, a child born in Canada is a Canadian citizen.

• (1320)

A few exceptions apply. If a parent of the child is a diplomat, there are a number of exceptions. These exceptions are maintained in the bill before us today.

Then there is the whole question of the physical presence with regard to residency. It boils down to the fact that a person who has been physically present in Canada for three years is a Canadian citizen. One should remember that today's reality, both in Canada and across the world, is that, with globalization and other trends, an increasing number of citizens are travelling.

In recent years, we have seen the large number of foreign immigrants and investors who invest in several countries and who must take into consideration the provisions of the Citizenship Act. This bill takes into account these two aspects, including the globalization aspect, the fact that people, particularly business people, have to travel more and more frequently to other countries.

Another aspect of Bill C-16 is foreign adoption. I think all parliamentarians know that, right now, a child adopted abroad must go through the permanent residence process before being granted Canadian citizenship.

Of course, under the existing Citizenship Act, medical examinations are mandatory at the time when an application is made. The whole process is often lengthy, and more than anything else, it gets in the way.

The bill before us will speed up the process for granting citizenship to children adopted abroad. As we often hear, it is like motherhood and apple pie. It is certainly in our best interest to facilitate the acquisition of citizenship for adopted children. However, one thing must be clear. Everybody knows it, but I think it is important to remind the hon. members.

In Quebec, the whole issue of adoption comes under the Civil Code. In this regard, I would say that the changes made pose a certain number of problems for us with respect not to content but to form of course. We firmly believe that, on this issue, it is important to define the mechanisms of co-operation between the provincial government and the federal government in order to comply with the Civil Code of Quebec.

I remind members, and I will take the trouble to read the part of the bill dealing with adoption, that:

8. The Minister shall, on application, grant citizenship to a person who, after February 14, 1977, was adopted by a citizen while the person was a minor child and whose adoption:

(a) was in the best interests of the child;

(b) created a genuine relationship of parent and child;—

(d) was not intended to circumvent the requirements under any enactment for admission to Canada or citizenship.

As I pointed out, we are not against the underlying principle of the bill, but we firmly believe that there should be mechanisms for co-operation between the two governments in order to facilitate its enforcement in compliance with the Civil Code of Quebec.

What Quebec is asking for in this regard is that a bilateral approach be taken to ensure consultation at all stages of the process before the federal government grants citizenship.

• (1325)

We believe that this work should be done in co-operation with the provincial government. When Bill C-63, which has now

Government Orders

become Bill C-16, was reviewed, a number of stakeholders, including the Fédération des parents du Québec, told us “We support the principle, but we are asking the federal government to put in place a mechanism that will respect Quebec’s requests”.

Another issue is the oath of citizenship. I want to read the oath of citizenship. The bill provides that:

A person acquires citizenship on being granted citizenship by the Minister and taking the oath of citizenship.

The current oath reads as follows:

I swear that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, Queen of Canada, Her Heirs and Successors, and that I will faithfully observe the laws of Canada and fulfil my duties as a Canadian citizen.

Bill C-16 provides that, from now on, newcomers will have to express their loyalty to Canada. The oath will be replaced by the following:

From this day forward, I pledge my loyalty and allegiance to Canada and Her Majesty Elizabeth the Second, Queen of Canada. . .

I am convinced that the member for Bourassa has a deep respect for Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, because in his numerous missions abroad he had the opportunity to meet her many times.

Hon. Denis Coderre: Not yet.

Mr. Bernard Bigras: I continue reading the new oath of citizenship:

I promise to respect our country’s rights and freedoms, to uphold our democratic values, to faithfully observe our laws and fulfil my duties and obligations as a Canadian citizen.

We admit that there must be an oath of allegiance. However, in our opinion, and the amendments by my colleague for Hochelaga—Maisonneuve to Bill C-63 in connection with this oath of allegiance, to the Queen of course, but also to Canada, provide that a certain number of documents clearly setting out the democratic values of Quebec ought to be provided. These documents were adopted, often unanimously, by the Quebec National Assembly.

What my colleague for Hochelaga—Maisonneuve proposed was the following: Would it be possible, at the time of the oath of allegiance, to provide people with the Quebec elections act, in order to provide Canadian citizens who are members of Quebec’s political community with the most accurate information possible concerning the democratic reality of Quebec, so that they may exercise their democratic duty in as transparent a manner as possible.

We also wanted new citizens to be presented at the time of their swearing in with the Government of Quebec’s declaration on interethnic and inter-racial relations.

This is a document that was adopted by the National Assembly on December 10, 1986. I would remind hon. members that this was

not a declaration presented by a sovereignist Parti Québécois government. No. It was a legitimately elected Government of Quebec, a Liberal government no less. It was passed by the National Assembly. We believe all new Canadian citizens should be made aware of this declaration, which is based on a statement adopted and proclaimed by the United Nations in November 1983.

• (1330)

The third element we would like to see communicated to new Canadian citizens when they take the citizenship oath contained in Bill C-16 is the charter of the French language, passed in 1977. This charter states that French is the language of common use and the working language in Quebec.

Of course, through the years this charter has been slashed by judgments of the supreme court, but we still see it as the fundamental expression of the political community of Quebec and a clear demonstration that business, work and teaching are done in French in Quebec.

We believe that in Quebec and in particular in Montreal, where I live, there is linguistic duality, but that Montreal is and hopefully will remain a French language city in America. It is our belief that the charter of the French language, if it were given to new citizens when they take the oath of allegiance contained in Bill C-16, could send a clear message to those new Canadian citizens.

Another document we believe should be given to new Canadian citizens is the Quebec charter of rights and freedoms.

Communication of these documents is not only the Bloc Québécois’ idea. This idea did not come out of the blue. It also had the support of numerous organisations in Quebec and among them, of course, the Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste de Montréal. I see the hon. member for Bourassa smiling and saying to himself “Indeed, the sovereignist family sticks together more then ever.”

However, contrary to what the hon. member may believe, the Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste was not the only supporter of the amendment proposed by the hon. member for Hochelaga—Maisonneuve. Mr. Dorsaint, of the Office of the Haitian Christian Community of Montreal also gave his support to the amendment. The member for Bourassa, who was smiling at what I said a moment ago, probably knows Mr. Dorsaint pretty well because he goes visits his riding on a regular basis and knows that there is an sizeable Haitian community in his riding. The president of the Haitian Christian Community supported the amendments proposed by the Bloc Québécois. So did Mr. Corbo, chancellor of the Université du Québec, and many others.

We believe these requests are certainly legitimate and would help improve this bill.

Government Orders

This morning, I asked that there be at least one day of public hearings on Bill C-16. I did it because we basically think, and I personally think, that even though it is, for all intents and purposes, a carbon copy of Bill C-63, the committee must study this bill. We cannot consider a bill in committee and report it without giving people a chance to be heard. That would be a serious breach of democracy that penalizes a certain number of groups that want to improve this bill.

• (1335)

I am pleased that the committee finally yielded to my arguments. I see my colleague from the Conservative Party, who did not quite agree with what I was saying in committee this morning, as well as the member from the NDP. However, the committee finally yielded to my arguments. Why? Because the committee is the place where we can do an in depth study of the bills before us, and we must study this bill.

However, we must not take too long to study this bill. Why? Now I am the one who is yielding to the arguments presented by my colleagues this morning, because we are still waiting for the complete reform of the Citizenship Act that the government has been promising us for a long time.

Yesterday, the committee chair officially tabled the report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration on the refugee status determination system. I think that this rather eloquent report, the majority of whose recommendations the Bloc Quebecois supports, shows that there was a problem with the legislation, that it needed to be improved, that there was an important problem in terms of resources. Although the Bloc Quebecois agrees with the bulk of the recommendations, I would remind members that, if they take the trouble to read the standing committee's report, they will see that it includes an opinion that is described as "dissenting" but that could more properly be called "complementary".

What I took out of this—I am the new citizenship and immigration critic—is that there was an important problem in the study of the process for determining refugee status. This also pointed up the fact that a new act was required as soon as possible.

In Quebec, for example, over 160,000 asylum seekers have been taken in since the mid-80s. This is quite a number. These are people who, for political reasons, feel that they have a right, under the United Nations Refugee Convention—which was adopted in 1951—to apply as political refugees.

The Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada's lax approach to processing claims is cause for grave concern. When it can take more than a year for the commission to rule on the refugee status of an individual, we can imagine the human tragedy these people have to go through. We can imagine the tragedy their families have to go through? Why does this happen? Because our system is vague, weak and inadequate.

I think that we have to be very careful because Bill C-16 on citizenship and immigration has to be amended. We believe it does. However, we also believe that we have to pay particular attention to the refugee status determination process. Bill C-16 is an important bill. I have already said that the government can count on our support on the principle of the bill. However, we strongly wish for the support of the government regarding the commitments and the amendments that will be put forward by the Bloc Quebecois.

The Bloc Quebecois raised another point on the refugee status determination process in its minority report.

• (1340)

There is a whole section on detention in the committee report. Surprisingly enough, it is considered in that section that up to now, the federal government was justified in detaining a certain number of individuals who had illegally crossed our borders in boats or even in containers, as odd as that may seem.

I remind members of the immigration department's guidelines. We can detain a person who does not have proper identification or a person who represents a threat to the public security. I totally agree with that.

However, we were hoping the committee report would deal with a new reality, the illegal immigration of minors. Over the last few months, particularly in the Port of Vancouver, we have seen a number of individuals coming through our borders by boat, by air and sometimes by container. We have seen children arriving by boat, particularly young Chinese under 18.

We have seen Romanian children arriving by container in the Port of Montreal. The federal government ordered that these minors be incarcerated in Immigration Canada detention centres. That is unacceptable. I think these minors, these children, should be granted special status.

In my dissenting report, I based my argument on UNICEF's Convention on the Rights of the Child, and I quote article 37 of that convention, which states:

No child shall be deprived of his or her liberty unlawfully or arbitrarily. The arrest, detention or imprisonment of a child shall be in conformity with the law and shall be used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time.

I believe all the laws dealing with immigration in Canada should exempt minors from detention. I think, for example, of the many young Chinese who came into Canada, illegally perhaps, but who were incarcerated in the Immigration Canada detention centre in Laval. I think we have a basic human rights problem here.

Canada must act and change its laws in accordance with UNICEF's Convention on the Rights of the Child. I am sure that the hon. member for Bourassa is in total agreement on such a

legislative change, and I would like the minister to take it under advisement.

Another major element is the position developed in the last months, even in the last weeks, by three governments. The Quebec government, of course, including those Quebecers I represent in this House, but the governments of Ontario and British Columbia also pointed out the lax approach of the Immigration and Refugee Board to processing claims. There is a 12 to 13 month waiting period before refugee status is granted, while the target should be six months.

Would it not be possible that the costs for services provided to those people waiting for a federal decision be paid for by the federal government instead of provincial governments? In some respects, because of the federal government lax approach, the processing time of claims is unacceptable, which results in increased service costs.

• (1345)

I remind the hon. members that this represents \$80 million each year for Quebec. I think the federal government should accept the view of the provinces.

Another major element is the issue of the board, but with regard to Bill C-16, the issue is the oath commissioners.

I have some concerns about the definition of the responsibilities and mandate given to these oath commissioners, who will have increasingly a rather special role to play. When I read the bill, I have a number of reserves and concerns about the impartiality of these commissioners, who should play their role as fairly as possible.

Probably because it is not specified in the bill, we fear that the commissioners might play the role of propagandists. We believe the wording of the bill might result in the commissioners playing a very dangerous role and, to a certain extent, a political role.

We might have the opportunity to come back to this later, but I ask the government to take into consideration these concerns the opposition parties have. We fear the commissioners might have to promote the values that symbolize Canadian citizenship. We agree with the values of civicism, respect for the law and understanding among individuals. However, we fear that with the measures being promoted by the Canada Information Office and the Council for Canadian Unity, the government might try to use the commissioners for political purposes. This is a concern.

The concept of citizenship has a meaning for us, and in keeping with our plan to become sovereign, we are working on developing a Quebec citizenship. Over the last few months, the Bloc Quebecois has launched several projects.

An hon. member: Oh, oh.

Government Orders

Mr. Bernard Bigras: I see the member for Bourassa is reacting once again. He travels abroad more and more frequently, and he is catching up on what the opposition parties have to say.

I think our citizenship is evolving in such a way that it is now part of Quebec political community. With all due respect to the member for Bourassa, in Quebec, we share one language, one public history and one public culture.

We believe Quebec is unique and this uniqueness is expressed through a Quebec citizenship which is increasingly part of a political community.

I now conclude this speech of close to 40 minutes and I especially want to thank the member for Bourassa for listening to me for these 40 minutes.

[*English*]

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to be able to take part in the debate surrounding Bill C-16.

Someone much wiser than I once said that there is no higher honour that one can have than that of being a citizen in a democracy. I firmly believe that and I believe that Canadians are doubly blessed and feel even more strongly than some in that regard.

• (1350)

Canadians, first and foremost, do value their Canadian citizenship and their right to belong to this great country. Coming with that privilege also comes obligations and responsibilities, both of which we also welcome and value as part of our Canadian citizenship.

Obviously most Canadians hold this issue very dear and very close to them by virtue of the fact that we had 37 groups and organizations make representations to the committee as it studied Bill C-63, which was the immediate predecessor of Bill C-16. Thirty-seven groups from all across the country felt strongly enough and genuinely motivated enough about this issue, which really only amends the Citizenship Act in quite minor ways, to give of their time to share their ideas with our committee. We took their representations very seriously and I believe crafted the better part of their recommendations into what we have before us today as Bill C-16.

I am proud to say that our caucus too is fiercely proud of its Canadian citizenship. We consider ourselves fiercely proud Canadian nationalists. We consider ourselves champions of this country. Our citizenship is the vehicle by which we are given the licence to advocate on behalf of our country and speak loudly and proudly about it wherever we can here and elsewhere.

Government Orders

I lament the fact that somehow being a fiercely proud Canadian citizen has somehow fallen out of fashion. It is not nearly as common or as typical in this place to hear even what was heard 20 or 30 years ago when members of the Liberal Party at that time occupied themselves to a great degree on the issue of Canadian nationalism, foreign ownership and concentration of foreign ownership. There were people such as Walter Gordon in the old days who would stand up in the House and speak passionately about keeping Canada Canadian, not losing our economic sovereignty and not selling out to foreign ownership. It is now creeping higher and higher to the point where Canadians really have to question who is running the show and if we really do have economic sovereignty.

When we talk about citizenship we cannot help but think of those things and that thrust we feel sometimes. It is time and maybe this bill gives us the opportunity to review the whole subject of taking back our country with our pride in our Canadian citizenship.

Citizenship is not only how we define ourselves as part of the nation-state, another threatened concept frankly in today's globalized economy. The whole idea of the nation-state in its very best light is at very grievous risk of surviving this new globalization in the economy. It is also how we view ourselves as a part of a community. As a citizen it makes us part of a community and it is by virtue of that fact that we can build community. We feel very strongly that this is also at risk in an age where there is a growing importance attached to the individual and not to the collective.

Being a citizen means that one is part of a broader community that is greater than the sum of its parts and that is a very healthy thing. It is one of the reasons why so many Canadians were motivated to come out to share their ideas with us. They feel passionately about this too and they also feel threatened by these very things that I have raised.

The whole globalization of capital and global trade agreements, such as the MAI, WTO or NAFTA, threaten three things which we hold as very dear and precious to us. First, they do threaten the whole concept of citizenship. Second, they threaten the concept of democracy. Third, they certainly threaten the concept of the nation-state as we know it today and as we view Canada in such a proud way as a strong, healthy national government. I put it to the House that all those things are at risk and that is why we saw such a high level of interest in this bill, a disproportionate level of interest given the fact that the bill really only amends the citizenship practices in a very modest way. It gives people a forum to raise this much larger picture.

We look at examples such as what happened in Seattle as growing evidence that young people are very seized of this issue. Young people are very concerned that globalization is in fact chipping away at the concepts of citizenship, democracy and the nation-state. People asked me how I could make this quantum leap from talking about citizenship to talking about the globalization of

capital. Frankly, it is self-evident that as we confer more and more powers on unelected bodies, corporations, if you will, and grant them nation-state status, they then have primacy over the freely elected officials, such as the ones in this room, and our ability to govern our own economic sovereignty.

• (1355)

There are perfect examples, recent examples, that we could point to where our own country is feeling this pinch. The Ethyl Corporation lawsuit is a classic example where we, as democratically elected officials who have chosen that we do not want a certain product circulated in our system because we feel it is a hazard to the common good, get our wrists slapped by this senior power, this higher power, this corporate power that says we cannot do that because we are interfering with its opportunity to make a profit and it will sue us for lost opportunity. That is a classic example of the threat to democracy, the threat to the nation-state and the threat to citizenship as we know it.

When we take power away from the freely elected politicians and give it to this other third party, another power, we are gradually eroding our ability to conduct our own affairs and be masters of our own domestic economy.

Canadians I know across this country want the bill dealt with expeditiously. In fact most of us, certainly in our caucus, would like to see it dealt with today and finished with in the House so it can go back to committee, follow through the process and ultimately become law for the simple reason that Canadians want to talk about more important aspects of immigration and refugee issues.

The actual citizenship bill, as I pointed out, makes quite minor changes to the way that we deal with the citizenship issue. The larger issue, the issue that Canadians are really seized with I believe, is the bigger picture of immigration as a whole and what immigration means in terms of growing our economy.

Canadians want basic questions dealt with. The first question they want to deal with when it comes to immigration is how big should Canada be. Has anybody ever really had that debate in the House? How big should Canada be as a country? Until we have that debate, how can we possibly make good rules regarding how much immigration we should have and how many people we should let in every year? We need to know what our goals are and then make meaningful rules to help us achieve those goals.

We have the cart well before the horse in this case because here we are dealing with issues regarding immigration without ever having had that basic, fundamental debate. We can take guidance as we enter that debate about how big Canada should be from our predecessors in the House. Wilfrid Laurier stood up in this place and said "By the year 2000 Canada should be a country of 100 million people". That was the goal. Pierre Trudeau said and the Economic Council of Canada in the late 1960s said "By the year 2000 Canada should be a country of 50 million". We are still way

off. We have failed to achieve those goals, even although they are modified somewhat.

At the current rate of immigration and growth we are just about right to remain stagnant, which means in 50 years we will still be a country of whatever we are today, 30 million people.

The Speaker: Actually you are not out of time. You have well over 11 minutes left, but it is almost 2 p.m. I think this is a good point as you are coming into a new idea, so we will go to Statements by Members.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

HOMELESSNESS

Mrs. Karen Redman (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to speak about the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System known as HIFIS.

This new information system is created under the research and information transfer mandate of Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. It is designed to assemble information which is both reliable and comprehensive on homelessness in communities across Canada.

For the first time shelters and cities will have an accurate count of the number of homeless individuals and families using shelters and to monitor the services used.

Developing a better understanding of homelessness through initiatives such as HIFIS is only part of the solution to this problem. On December 17, 1999 the Government of Canada committed \$753 million for initiatives designed to help reduce and prevent homelessness in Canada.

The Government of Canada currently provides \$1.9 billion annually to support approximately 644,000 community based housing units for seniors, people with disabilities and low income families.

* * *

● (1400)

RACISM

Mr. Jim Pankiw (Saskatoon—Humboldt, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, March 21 marked the international day for the elimination of racism, but social engineers in Canada continue with their agenda of discriminatory affirmative action programs.

By refusing to eliminate race based employment equity quotas the Liberal government is contributing to the problem of racism. State sanctioned discrimination condoned by the Liberal govern-

S. O. 31

ment and promoted by the NDP is offensive to all Canadians who value the principles of equality and merit.

To people in the target groups it conveys the message that they are inferior and incapable of competing on a level playing field. To those not in the target group it conveys the message that they cannot apply because their skin colour disqualifies them from being considered fairly, regardless of their ability.

My Reform colleagues and I call upon the government to eliminate racial discrimination by scrapping state sanctioned, race based employment equity quotas. If the evils of racism have taught us anything, it is that we cannot discriminate in favour of someone because of their race without unfairly discriminating against someone else because of theirs.

* * *

FISHERIES

Mr. Lou Sekora (Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week the hon. Minister of Fisheries and Oceans announced that Canada's exports of food and seafood products reached a record high of \$3.7 billion in 1999.

I want to congratulate the hardworking men and women in our fishery industry.

* * *

ELIAN GONZALEZ

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since November of last year a six year old Cuban boy, Elian Gonzalez, has been held in the United States in gross violation of humanitarian principles and international law. After witnessing the tragic drowning of his mother, Elian has been denied the right to return to the family he loves in Cuba, forced to stay with a great uncle who has a history of child abuse and drunk driving.

On Tuesday of this week a U.S. district court judge ruled that Elian could no longer be kept in the United States against the will of his father and grandparents. As Judge Moore said, "Each passing day is another day lost between Juan Gonzalez and his son".

Elian Gonzalez has become the victim of what can only be called appalling abuse at the hands of powerful Miami lobby groups such as the Cuban American National Foundation.

The U.S. immigration authorities and U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno have both called for the return of Elian to his father. My New Democrat colleagues and I urge the foreign affairs minister to end his silence on this outrage and to intervene in the case, calling on the U.S. president to put an end to this tragic and pathetic farce and allow Elian Gonzalez to immediately return home to his family.

*S. O. 31***FAMILY SERVICES OF PEEL**

Mr. Steve Mahoney (Mississauga West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, “Working to Your Full Potential” is a new and unique program sponsored by Family Services of Peel and funded by HRDC. The mandate of this project is to provide one-on-one counselling, support, referral and case management for persons who, in addition to job loss or joblessness, deal with obstacles interfering with job finding and job maintenance. This program is offered free of charge to unemployed individuals in my riding and throughout Peel Region.

Since its inception just six months ago the program has assisted over 125 people and is continuing its work to address the health and well-being issues of individuals and families in the neighbourhoods of Peel.

“Working To Your Full Potential” is committed to helping people recognize and strive toward their potential.

I congratulate and thank Family Services of Peel and HRDC for offering this initiative and I encourage them to keep up the good work.

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VISUAL AND MEDIA ARTS

Ms. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour today to rise and congratulate the recipients of the first ever Governor General's awards in visual and media arts.

While the Governor General has long awarded excellence in the performing arts and literature, this is the first time that achievements in the visual and media arts have been recognized.

This year's winners—John Scott, Ghitta Caiserman-Roth, Doris Shadbolt, John Chalke, Jacques Giraldeau, and from my own riding of St. Paul's, Michael Snow—have earned distinction for their contributions to the world of painting, filmmaking, ceramics and activism in the arts.

I commend them on their achievements and applaud the Governor General for completing her trilogy of awards honouring the best in Canadian arts and culture.

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PATRICK KELLY

Mr. Bill Gilmour (Nanaimo—Alberni, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, Patrick Kelly has been in prison for 18 years for a crime he says he did not commit. Kelly's conviction for the murder of his wife was based on testimony by a key witness who now admits that she lied.

The Ontario Court of Appeal examined this case and handed down a divided decision, with one judge calling for a new trial. The

justice minister then had the opportunity to clear any question of guilt or innocence by granting Patrick either a new trial or a supreme court reference.

• (1405)

The minister had nothing to lose by reopening the courts. Yet last Friday the justice minister denied Patrick Kelly his right to justice.

This issue is not about guilt or innocence; it is about a flawed justice system that has denied Patrick Kelly a fair hearing before the courts. Given the circumstances of this case, the minister's decision is a grave miscarriage of justice.

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[Translation]

SEMAINE D'ACTION CONTRE LE RACISME

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont, BQ): Mr. Speaker, March 20 to 26, 2000 will be la Semaine d'action contre le racisme.

The originality of this first Quebec week of action against racism, lies in the fact that it brings together in concerted action a number of different Quebec organizations, particularly those dealing with racial discrimination, and some others, in order to propose various activities around reflection, consciousness raising, and creation as well, aimed at the general public, youth in particular. Their underlying purpose is not so much to make demands as to get people involved and to bring people together.

The week of action against racism focuses on two components, one of reflection and the other of cultural activities, coupled with a wide range of activities and initiatives relating to tolerance, equality and intercultural discovery.

I wish all Quebecers success as this week of action against racism draws to a close.

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[English]

KASHMIR

Mr. Gurbax Singh Malhi (Bramalea—Gore—Malton—Springdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to add my voice to the worldwide cries of outrage and heartbreak over Monday night's cold-blooded killing of 36 Sikhs in Chitt is inghpura, Kashmir.

The time has come for the global village to demand an end to the violence against all minorities, wherever they may live, all around the world. We strongly condemn attacks of violence against minorities and civilians.

Finally, I would ask all members of the House to join me in offering our deepest sympathies to the community, especially to the families of the victims.

REVENUE CANADA

Mr. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, in 1988 Corporal Knibbs of the RCMP used his job transfer allowance. Ordinarily, under the rules of the day, this was considered an RCMP expense, not income to Corporal Knibbs.

Revenue Canada arbitrarily changed the rules and charged tax on the allowance to Corporal Knibbs, who then promptly filed an objection. Revenue Canada replied by saying that its final decision would be based on an upcoming ruling, but in the meantime his tax would be held in abeyance. Incredibly, 10 years went by before Revenue Canada ruled against the corporal, who promptly paid his tax bill.

The final insult was a further bill, 30 days later, for penalty and interest for the 10 years of Revenue Canada foot dragging. That is absolutely outrageous. When is the Liberal government going to rein in its tax hungry, hard-hearted tax department and stop victimizing hardworking Canadians like Corporal Knibbs?

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[Translation]

CANADIAN ECONOMY

Mr. Raymond Lavigne (Verdun—Saint-Henri, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt about the economic vigour of Canada. Once again yesterday, Statistics Canada announced that international trade in Canadian products had reached an unprecedented high. Its January level was \$4.53 billion, compared to \$2.74 billion in December 1999. Statistics Canada pointed out that the last record high was \$4.47 billion in May 1996.

Since we have been in power, we have played a lead role, implementing policies favourable to job creation and attracting investments.

The people of Canada have worked in partnership with the Liberal government. Today we are reaping the benefits of a good government that has made the right decisions.

* * *

LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Mitis, BQ): Mr. Speaker:

So how are things, Jane? Fill me in.
 way I see it, all is well
 Although one item I should tell. E So small, so lacking in import
 And hardly worthy of report,
 HRDC a crisis faces,
 Humongous, but apart from that,
 Just fine, just great, so worry not.

So how are things, Paul? Fill me in.
 The party is in crisis deep.
 What say you, trait'rous minister?
 Give me your version of events.
 The way I see it, all is well

S. O. 31

Although one item I should tell.
 So small, so lacking in import
 And hardly worthy of report,
 The party lustre fades and dulls,
 The Leader, clinging, carries on
 Regardless, but apart from that,
 Just fine, just great, so worry not.

So how are things, Jean? Fill me in.
 One minister my job would have.
 How so, oh very shaky one?
 What is your version of events? E It goes like this, I must admit
 My star is fading out of sight
 Because of grants not processed right,
 One minister resign just might,
 Police my riding seem to like,
 Alliance members love our plight,
 The Bloc is moving up all right—
 Disaster, but apart from that,
 Just fine, just great, so worry not.

* * *

• (1410)

GRANBY ZOO

Ms. Diane St-Jacques (Shefford, PC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to congratulate the whole staff at the Granby Zoo for the prestigious award it just won, namely the provincial component of the Attractions Canada 2000 contest.

The Granby Zoo will represent Quebec in Vancouver, on April 28, at Attractions Canada's national gala. Thanks to the addition of the Amazoo aquatic park, the Granby Zoo keeps winning awards.

The Granby Zoo is a profitable business that has been in existence for over 40 years. It employs about 250 people during peak periods and provides economic spinoffs of about \$10 million annually.

I take this opportunity to pay tribute to the founder of the Granby Zoo, Pierre-Horace Boivin, a man who, inspired by his love for animals and people, believed in his dream and fulfilled it by giving the town of Granby a true zoological garden.

The zoo is a major tourist attraction in our riding and I am pleased to invite you to come for a visit as early as May.

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[English]

MAPLE SYRUP SEASON

Mr. Hec Clouthier (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what is this liquid gold, this amber nectar, this food of the gods that mesmerizes, tantalizes and inspires the tongue?

In my great riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke this sweet sensation, this heavenly harvest, is flowing from the hills of Wilno to the valleys of Bagot, Blythfield and Brougham.

I am talking about the opening of maple syrup season.

Oral Questions

It was my great honour to hammer the first spigot at Sexton Farms at the opening of Renfrew County's maple syrup season.

Maple syrup season is a sure sign that spring has arrived and that the slumber of winter has departed. Now we are all being rewarded with this glorious golden treat.

I firmly believe it is only fitting that Canada's greatest symbol, all that we hold dear, the maple leaf, comes from a tree whose lifeblood brings such sweet passion to all Canadians.

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GOVERNMENT GRANTS

Mr. Dale Johnston (Wetaskiwin, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, declaring "everyone loses", Arthur Kroeger, a former HRDC deputy minister and Mel Cappe's predecessor, today chastised parliament for failing to provide guidance to officials on what it would regard as a sensible balance between the oversight of the expenditure of public funds and the flexibility of serving clients.

What this former bureaucrat failed to mention is the unprecedented amount of political interference by the governing Liberals. This goes to the very heart of the problem. Grants without applications are not the result of overworked officials but the unwarranted intrusion of Liberal politicians.

As Canadians fill out their tax forms and sign over their hard earned dollars to the government they have every right to expect that the money will be used judiciously and not as a political slush fund.

There is something rotten about the way the government has manipulated the grants and contributions programs and until there is a new government over there the biggest losers will continue to be the Canadian taxpayers.

* * *

ATLANTIC FISHERIES

Ms. Angela Vautour (Beauséjour—Petitcodiac, PC): Mr. Speaker, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans is presently buying back lobster fishing licences in New Brunswick.

Although it claims that this is totally a voluntary process, fishers in Atlantic Canada feel forced into having to sell their fishing gear, with fear that soon there will be no more fishing industry left.

These fishers are worried because no progress has yet been made on agreements with members of the native fishing communities, while tensions between natives and non-natives appear to have been increasing since the Marshall decision.

The federal government is once again turning its back on Atlantic Canada by refusing to show leadership in this growing crisis. DFO is responsible for the management of fish stocks and it

should have firm rules in place prior to the start of the spring fishing season.

I call upon the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans to resolve this dispute before there is a collapse in the fishing industry, which includes lobster, scallop, crab and shrimp, to name a few.

The livelihood of too many Maritime families is at stake.

* * *

[Translation]

THE BUDGET

Mr. Denis Paradis (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, thanks to the efforts of all Canadians, our country has entered a new era, an era of budget surpluses.

Canadians from all regions of the country will benefit from a budget that will ensure them of a great future. Our education system is unsurpassed, our social effort is continuing and our taxes will drop over the next five years. In addition to that, our researchers are innovating.

There are over 250 community futures development corporations in our small towns and villages. These corporations promote local economies. They also help small businesses.

Budget 2000 includes a \$54 million envelope, over a three year period, to provide increased funding to existing CFDCs and to create new ones.

• (1415)

The CFDCs take various initiatives to develop and diversify local economies. They support small businesses by providing them with financial assistance, to a maximum of \$125,000. They draft and implement strategic plans, in co-operation with other stakeholders.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

EXPORT DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Mr. Preston Manning (Leader of the Opposition, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is amazing to watch the trade minister boast about the work of the Export Development Corporation and completely ignore its greatest defect.

Yesterday the trade minister said "in the last 50 years—the Canadian government has only granted about \$1 billion to the EDC", only a billion. What he failed to mention is that taxpayers are on the hook for all of EDC's bad loans and that total is now \$2.8 billion. By ignoring this loss of taxpayer dollars, why is the minister making exactly the same mistake he made as minister of human resources?

Oral Questions

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I should thank the Leader of the Opposition for coming back to a good news story and bringing attention to the good work of the EDC for Canadian exporters.

As for the debt, Canada and OECD partners participate in debt rescheduling discussions at the Paris Club. These talks are aimed at helping poorer countries by adjusting their debt repayments. These decisions are made for humanitarian and political reasons and they make a lot of sense.

Mr. Preston Manning (Leader of the Opposition, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is amazing what these Liberal ministers choose to ignore, and it is always at the taxpayers' interest.

The human resources minister boasts about her department's projects but ignores a billion dollar boondoggle. The trade minister boasts about EDC but completely ignores \$2.8 billion in bad debts for which taxpayers are liable. How is the minister holding EDC accountable for bad loans for which the taxpayers are on the hook?

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is a good player on the international scene, is a member of the Paris Club, and with the other OECD countries participates in debt reduction, debt rescheduling and elimination for the poorer countries for humanitarian reasons.

It is tough for the Reform Party to understand, but for humanitarian considerations we moved all the lending countries together on these things. This is a political decision. The government compensates EDC for these sovereign debt reductions, reductions it would not make otherwise.

Mr. Preston Manning (Leader of the Opposition, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, no one is objecting to legitimate export financing or humanitarian activity. What taxpayers find offensive is EDC lending money to huge corporations which are perfectly capable of financing their own purchases, in order for those companies to buy goods and services from Liberal connected companies in Canada.

For example, Brazilian oil giant Petrobras got a \$10 million line of credit from EDC to buy products from Earth Canada. That liberally connected corporation's board was graced with the Prime Minister's pals, Gilles Champagne and René Fugère. Why should taxpayers be assisting huge foreign firms to—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister for International Trade.

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the two weeks that they have had the opportunity to look into the particular case of Earth Canada, one would have hoped that the leader's research staff would have had

the opportunity to explain to him that Earth Canada never used the line of credit. It actually got other private sector credit to do its transaction. It has not received any support from EDC at this time.

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it would be nice to have a look at the books but of course the minister will not let us do that. Nor will he let anyone else have a look at EDC's books. It would be nice also to think that the hard earned money taxpayers send into the government is not going to subsidize deals between oil giants and friends of the Prime Minister.

Petrobras is worth more than \$2 billion. Yet for some reason René Fugère and Gilles Champagne, good friends of the Prime Minister on the board of directors of Earth Canada, somehow convinced the government it should establish a \$10 million line of credit for that company.

• (1420)

Taxpayers are already on the hook for \$2.8 billion in bad EDC loans. Why should they risk any more for friends of the Prime Minister?

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I reject these allegations. They just do not make any sense whatsoever. There are commercial confidentialities. That is the reason, we understand, the EDC needs to protect the information for its private sector clients.

Let me remind you, Mr. Speaker, that in the last six years the EDC has earned three times the auditor general's award for annual reporting. The auditor general has access to the board of directors minutes of meetings, transaction details and financial records. Let me quote again the auditor general: "In my opinion these transactions are—"

The Speaker: The hon. member for Fraser Valley.

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, just so it is clear, let us go through it. Petrobras is worth billions and is owned by the Brazilian government. It is kind of hard to understand why it would be coming to the Canadian government for cash. That is exactly what it did. It wanted a line of credit. It came to the Canadian government even though it is a Brazilian owned company.

Is it government policy to lend millions to foreign companies that do not need the money, or does it just select certain companies depending on who is on the board of directors?

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Reform Party has a very hard time to accept a good news corporation that does good work and has made more than \$500 million in profits for Canadian companies and exporters.

Oral Questions

I believe honestly that this country is a trading country and that this government will stand on the side of Canadian companies that want to do well in foreign markets. This is what Canadians expect from us.

* * *

[Translation]

HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Human Resources Development seems to consider it normal that the National Bank had a secret deal to give Placeteco \$1 million in credit, when the company was under the protection of the Bankruptcy Act.

Will the minister agree that only a formal guarantee from her trustee that her department's grant would be forthcoming could convince the National Bank to take such a risk? What other explanation can there be for the sudden generosity of the National Bank?

[English]

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what I will say is what I have been saying in the House. We have received invoices of an appropriate nature that accommodate the expenditures which were made in this particular case.

When it comes to this particular company we now see that we have 170 men and women who are working who otherwise would not be. On this side of the House we view that to be a good investment.

[Translation]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we will get back to the supposed invoices later.

Could the Minister of National Revenue tell us if one of his assistants bothered checking with the HRDC trustee, Gilles Champagne, whether the debt of \$255,000 owing to his department would be paid before the grant money was paid out?

Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of National Revenue and Secretary of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, according to my information, as far as Placeteco is concerned, we at the economic development agency have never been involved with this company.

As for National Revenue, hon. members know very well that there is a wall between the executive assistants and the political staff, a separation to protect confidentiality. If a specific question is asked on a specific issue, hon. members know very well that I cannot comment on a specific file, because of that confidentiality.

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, with proof to

back us up, we showed that there was an agreement between the National Bank and Placeteco to have \$1 million from Human Resources Development Canada paid directly to the National Bank.

When the minister allowed her trustee, lawyer Gilles Champagne, to secure a loan with the grant, did she not realize that she was shortchanging all the small creditors who were kept in the dark about the grant's existence?

• (1425)

[English]

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again it is not for me to make determinations on how a private entity determines and uses its cash flow.

What I can confirm for the House is that an administrative review of this file was completed at the most senior levels in my department back in November. While that review indicated that there were administrative errors which had been made at the time, it also indicated that there was no reason for establishing any overpayment in this case.

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, how can the minister sit by, knowing that her trustee in the Placeteco affair is also the legal counsel for Claude Gauthier, the man who directed over \$1 million to the National Bank to the detriment of small creditors?

Does she not see this as a serious conflict between the two roles of Gilles Champagne, her trustee?

[English]

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again in this undertaking I want to make it clear that it is not up to me to determine how a private sector entity determines how to use its cash flow.

What I can confirm is that an administrative review was undertaken and in this case there is no reason or evidence to establish an overpayment.

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HEALTH

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the health minister. The last time the federal government cosied up to Ralph Klein on health care it accepted Alberta's plan for health privatization. Let us make no mistake about it. This secret deal paves the way for full blown, two tier health care.

When the Prime Minister meets with the Alberta premier in Calgary will it be a greet and grip photo op, or will the Prime Minister take the opportunity to state unequivocally that the government will repeal the privatization bill?

Oral Questions

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the NDP talks about a secret deal, about privatization agreements between us and the Klein government.

I am disappointed frankly, although I am not surprised, that the NDP has bought the Tory spin job hook, line and sinker. It is nonsense. Those 12 principles do not constitute an agreement between governments and they will never stand in the way of the Government of Canada enforcing the Canada Health Act.

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as usual the health minister avoids the question. As usual the health minister lawyers the facts. Yet the internal memos show clearly that Health Canada accepted Alberta's privatization principles.

Yesterday the Prime Minister tried to suggest there was no secret deal. My question is very simple. Will the Prime Minister deliver the message to Ralph Klein today that Ottawa rejects Klein's privatization principles?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the NDP would do better, rather than accepting the Tory's spin job, to pay attention to what is happening in the country.

What is happening is that this government has made it clear that private for profit hospitals are not the solution to the problems we face in medicare and that we can find innovations to solve those problems within the principles of the Canada Health Act.

Right now we have the draft bill. We have possible amendments, no regulations. Let us wait to see what the final bill looks like. The member can be assured that this government will be there to stand for the principles of the Canada Health Act.

* * *

HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Jean Dubé (Madawaska—Restigouche, PC): Mr. Speaker, today the auditor general informed the HRDC committee that the internal audit resulted in many meetings of departmental staff. Does the minister seriously believe that the deputy minister did not inform her of these findings before the day that she said?

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have answered this question on a number of occasions. Let me say that I was very glad to hear what the auditor general had to say to the standing committee. In fact let me quote. He said "Exceptional circumstances demand exceptional actions. The action plan is exceptional".

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Dubé (Madawaska—Restigouche, PC): Mr. Speaker, the deputy minister chaired several meetings of the audit committee at HRDC.

Is the minister telling the House that the deputy minister was negligent for failing to inform her of her department's meddling?

• (1430)

[English]

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in actual fact, I am very proud of the working relationship that I have with my deputy and the men and women who are part of Human Resources Development Canada.

As a result of the internal audit and looking at the information we have, we are now implementing a six point plan.

Let me go further and quote from the auditor general, who said "I am supportive of the six point action plan, that it can solve the immediate problems in the department and that it will monitor how the implementation of the plan is going in the department". The auditor general is working with us and he says that we are on track.

* * *

EXPORT DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the minister wants it both ways. He wants a tax free crown corporation that competes directly with the private sector and follows private sector confidentiality practices. However, he also wants to use the money not paid in taxes to provide export financing for Canada's powerful and profitable corporations with Liberal connections. This is a sweet deal at the expense of the taxpayers.

Canadians are in the dark because this government refuses to tell them how EDC spent its money. Why?

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me quote from some private sector individuals on what they think of the EDC. Let me quote the Canadian Chamber of Commerce that said "Export credit agencies, like the EDC, play a vital bridging role which lends the support that companies need to break into foreign and high risk markets and to make viable players. In no small measure, EDC has been a vital partner helping Canadian companies perform these roles".

Let me also quote from another client of EDC.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Calgary East.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, let me quote the Insurance Bureau of Canada, which said "EDC is alone in that it still has almost all its resources tied up in providing services that banks and insurers had been supplying for many years in other countries".

Oral Questions

Why is the government forcing the taxpayers to assume the risk that the private sector would be willing to take?

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the EDC has made more than \$500 million profit over the last five years.

Let me quote a financial institution. The Royal Bank Financial Group said that it values its EDC partnership because together they can assist Canadian companies of all sizes pursue opportunities in the global marketplace.

* * *

[Translation]

HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, to justify her refusal to give us the necessary explanations regarding Placeteco, the minister keeps repeating that this is a private matter.

Has the minister already forgotten that she herself is at the core of the Placeteco issue since her agent, trustee Gilles Champagne, was the main architect of this whole scheme, in addition to being one of the creditors, like Messrs. Gauthier and Giguère?

[English]

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, we have taken this file very seriously. As I mentioned earlier, an administrative review of this file was completed at the senior levels in my department.

I say again, that review indicated that there were administrative errors, but in no way did it indicate that there was an overpayment that would be established in this case.

[Translation]

Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister told this House that all grants from Human Resources Development Canada not used to create jobs would be repaid.

In the Placeteco affair, given that the job creation did not match the size of the grant, will HRDC get its money back, even though the main actors are all close friends of the Prime Minister?

[English]

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again let me note that the invoices we received for expenditures in this particular case were appropriate under the terms and conditions of the transitional jobs fund program.

There was no overpayment that needed to be established in this case.

EXPORT DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Mr. Charlie Penson (Peace River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, in 1999 the Export Development Corporation's business volume was \$40 billion. The minister keeps bragging about the \$118 million that EDC made in profit that year.

Can the minister tell us how much of that \$118 million bottom line actually comes directly from the taxpayers when the Government of Canada wrote off EDC's bad loans to foreign countries?

• (1435)

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the opposition has a very hard time understanding that EDC is working out of two accounts. The corporate account, which allows for 98% of its transactions, is doing exactly the good news that the opposition member is referring to, \$118 million just last year.

Out of the Canada account, which explains 2% of the transactions, we have, for humanitarian and political reasons, eliminated and rescheduled a number of debts to countries such as Poland. This is something for which Canadians can be proud.

Mr. Charlie Penson (Peace River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, maybe we can gather from that there are two sets of books at EDC.

EDC's annual report for 1998 indicates that the crown corporation is due to receive another \$97 million from the Government of Canada to bail it out for its bad loans. The government takes taxpayer dollars out of one department to give them to another and calls it a profit. That is Liberal economics at its finest, I am afraid.

Why is the government using taxpayer dollars to prop up EDC's bottom line?

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is not using taxpayer money to prop up EDC's accounts. I have explained this time and again. EDC does a great job with its corporate account and it helps thousands of Canadian companies on the markets.

However, when, for humanitarian and political reasons, we actually eliminated debts for poorer countries, the government compensated EDC for the political decisions it had made that it would not have otherwise made. Canada is a member of the club of Paris and we will move with all other lending countries in the world.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Human Resources Development just said once again that Placeteco's \$1.2 million grant was put to good use since the company's bills were paid. How can the minister say such a whopper when an internal memo from her own department, dated April 6, 1999, and obtained under the Access to Information Act, states "The employer, following the bankruptcy, no longer feels legally bound to justify the grant"?

Placeteco refuses to justify the grant, but all is well.

[English]

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, we do have the invoices that justify the grants and that is what is important here.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, not only does Placeteco refuse to justify the grant, but on page 2 of a report released just today, under the heading "The problem is serious", the auditor general wrote "Large amounts of public funds were spent without the appropriate controls, making it difficult to know whether the funds were used as intended, spent wisely and produced desired results".

Is it not time for the minister to tell us what happened to the \$1.2 million and to produce her invoices, if she has any?

[English]

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House believe it is important to invest in this particular region, the Mauricie in Quebec. We know that the hon. member for Trois-Rivières also feels it is important because he is receiving benefits from these particular projects.

There is another minister who said this about the area.

[Translation]

—is committed like never before to give priority to anything having to do with the Mauricie. Your region is not performing as it should, even though you have everything you need to succeed and to achieve the success that you deserve.

[English]

Who was that minister? It was Bernard Landry.

* * *

EXPORT DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Ms. Val Meredith (South Surrey—White Rock—Langley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, in its first annual report released two months

ago, the Amtrak Reform Council reported that Amtrak has not yet used a significant portion of the \$2.2 billion subsidy from American taxpayers. Why should it? It is using its \$1 billion subsidy from Canadian taxpayers. I am not sure whether it is from the corporate account or the humanitarian account.

• (1440)

Can the government please explain to the Canadian people why the single largest transportation investment that it has made has gone to the American, government owned Amtrak?

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear here that the loan to Amtrak was not on humanitarian grounds. It is part of the corporate account of EDC. I can confirm to the hon. member that the loan to Amtrak was at the commercial interest rate against purchasing some Canadian goods and it is being repaid on schedule. I can also tell the House that the account is very well managed, it is helping Canadian exporters and it is making a profit.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Charlie Penson: They should borrow from the bank like everybody else.

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for South Surrey—White Rock—Langley.

Ms. Val Meredith (South Surrey—White Rock—Langley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, Amtrak has access to over \$2 billion of American taxpayer money to run its operations and make capital purchases. It does not need additional capital.

Eighteen months ago, in response to a Canadian transportation committee recommendation, the Minister of Transport refused to restructure VIA Rail, denying it access to more capital.

Why is the priority of the government to improve the American transportation system rather than the Canadian transportation system?

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will have to repeat again that the EDC is there to promote Canadian exports. It is not there for transportation in this country. My colleague, the Minister of Transport, does a very fine job doing that.

The EDC has said time and again that it is supporting a loan to Amtrak at commercial interest rates in order to help Canadian exporters in that field. I am surprised to see that the Reform Party has now stopped liking profit.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

GASOLINE PRICING

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, back in 1998, some Liberal MPs looked into the issue of gasoline pricing.

Their report stated that prices would go up if their recommendations were not followed. Yet the Minister of Industry did nothing.

How can the minister today be proposing another task force, when we would surely not be in the position of having to go back to square one two years later, commissioning yet another study to the tune of \$600,000, if he had heeded the recommendations of his own colleagues?

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the preamble to the question is totally erroneous. First of all, I reacted promptly to the committee report, with several precise responses.

Second, we initiated a study as requested by the committee, as soon as was feasible, using a highly credible organization. The Bloc Québécois claims to want the facts, but apparently does not want to hear them.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex.

* * *

[English]

AGRICULTURE

Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food has been engaged in two days of intense negotiations with his provincial counterparts, working to reach a final agreement on a long term safety net program for all Canadian farmers.

Can the parliamentary secretary inform the House of any progress being made toward the objective of a national, effective and equitable safety net system that all farmers so desperately need?

• (1445)

Mr. Joe McGuire (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is a great day for federal-provincial co-operation. It is also a great day for the agricultural producers of Canada.

After two years of negotiation, our agriculture minister plus his 10 colleagues from across Canada have agreed to a three year farm safety net agreement. The main components of this agreement are \$665 million per year over the next three years for basic farm safety net funding plus \$435 million per year over—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Wanuskewin.

HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Wanuskewin, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Human Resources Development talks about openness and transparency yet she continues to stonewall on releasing information.

The Reform Party currently has 30 important access to information requests on which her department is up to a month late. In other words they are 30 days beyond the point of providing that material to us.

Why is the minister not respecting the access to information requests?

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I totally reject the allegations that the hon. member is making. After all, we have just released 10,000 pages of information to the House for the use of each and every one of the members of parliament. We are working hard to be transparent and open and we will continue to be. I would note that since the beginning of the year, we have received well over 300 access to information requests. We will deliver to the best of our ability. But I absolutely reject the allegation that we are not open and transparent.

Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Wanuskewin, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, these requests are not very complicated. They are simple audits and these audits need only to be put on the face of a copier, no white-out needed.

Has the minister not learned from her mistakes? Many of these requests are for audits like financial integrity and assessing the operational environment of HRDC. Treasury Board has ordered that all departments release internal audits without requiring an access request.

Why is the minister breaking Treasury Board guidelines in addition to breaking the law?

The Speaker: The hon. member for Bras d'Or—Cape Breton.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mrs. Michelle Dockrill (Bras d'Or—Cape Breton, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadian women have been suffering both economically and socially from the policies of the government since 1993.

The government's own EI report tabled yesterday by the Minister of Human Resources Development once again showed yet another discriminating policy of the government. Only 30% of unemployed Canadian women now qualify for EI.

Oral Questions

My question for the minister is quite simple. Will the minister stand up for Canadian women and stop these discriminating policies and correct the devastating gender imbalance which her government has created?

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, like all members on this side of the House, we always stand up for Canadian women.

I am glad to report that as a result of the changes to the employment insurance program, women are benefiting. They have benefited from the change to an hours based system. They have benefited from the small weeks program. They have benefited from the family supplement. Most of all, they have benefited from the fact that our economy is working. We see the unemployment levels for adult women in this country at the lowest they have been in a decade, at 5.8%.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it would be a good thing if the minister read her own report.

The employment insurance report, according to the Minister of Human Resources Development, says that people are adapting to the 1996 Liberal reform. Last weekend, the Prime Minister and the Liberal caucus for the Atlantic provinces called for changes to employment insurance because that is why they lost members in the Atlantic region.

Does the Minister of Human Resources Development agree that there is a contradiction between herself and the Prime Minister of Canada as well as the Atlantic Liberal caucus? It would seem to be high time for changes to EI to be made once and for all.

[English]

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is absolutely no contradiction.

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FISHERIES

Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore, PC): Mr. Speaker, DFO is buying back licences which will then be given to aboriginal fishers. Traditionally fishers have entered the industry by purchasing their own licences and boats. Low interest loans could be made available to first nations.

Will the minister commit today to selling licences and boats to aboriginal fishers to make sure everyone enters the industry on an equal footing?

• (1450)

Hon. Harbance Singh Dhaliwal (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what we have done is we have followed the consultations.

The hon. member and the fishing community have said that one of the ways to bring new entrants into the fishery is through a voluntary buyback of licences. Of course some of those include a whole enterprise, not just the licences themselves. That is exactly what we are doing. Through a voluntary retirement program we are buying up licences to make sure that we follow the law and follow the supreme court ruling which recognized the treaty that the Mi'kmaq signed more than 240 years ago.

Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore, PC): Mr. Speaker, buying back fishing licences from non-natives has nothing to do with the treaty that we signed 200 years ago.

The minister also knows that the fishing season will be opening in only a few weeks. He also knows on top of that that there must be organization and regulation in the fishery that will not be sprung upon fishers at the last minute.

Can the minister tell us what existing regulations the federal negotiator has given up in order to get agreements in place for the new season?

Hon. Harbance Singh Dhaliwal (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to announce to the House that we already have two signed agreements with the first nations bands. Discussions are going on at this moment. I hope that in the near future I will be able to announce more.

We said from day one that resolving this problem would be through dialogue and through sitting around the table and negotiating, unlike the Tories who said to use the notwithstanding clause to take away the treaty rights won by the supreme court. We rejected that position.

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NATIONAL PARKS

Mr. Rick Limoges (Windsor—St. Clair, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are becoming increasingly concerned that our beloved national parks might lose their lustre and environmental significance if usage and development are not properly controlled in accordance with a sustainable long term plan.

Can the Minister of Canadian Heritage report on her plans for action to ensure ecological integrity in our national parks?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am especially pleased to have that question today when the students of Buchanan Park School of the city of Hamilton are here, precisely because the ecological integrity panel today tabled a report that will preserve our national parks not only for our grandchildren but for their grandchildren.

Oral Questions

They gave us the template. They gave us the blueprint. It is our responsibility to follow this blueprint to make sure that ecological integrity is the number one priority to save every single park in Canada.

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HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

Mr. David Chatters (Athabasca, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the majority of information that has landed the human resources minister in hot water has been gathered through the Access to Information Act. I can see now why she might want to stonewall, but the law of Canada says that the minister must provide access information within 30 days. We now have 30 requests past 30 days.

Does the minister realize that by stonewalling beyond 30 days she is breaking the law of Canada?

The Speaker: Once we get into terms like breaking the law, we are getting into criminal activity. I cut one member off already today for using that term. Therefore I am going to say that this question is out of order.

* * *

[Translation]

CINAR

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères—Les-Patriotes, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we now know that several millions of CINAR's money was invested with Norshield International in the Bahamas.

This might well lead certain people to think that part of that sum might have come from public funds. Norshield International boasts of being a banking institution where, in its own words, financial discretion is de rigueur and customers benefit from immunity against foreign tax investigation.

Given the serious charges of tax fraud facing CINAR, does the Minister of Revenue not think he ought to launch a proper departmental investigation into this entire matter?

Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of National Revenue and Secretary of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said on numerous occasions, first, my colleague at Heritage Canada has already called for an investigation into the CINAR affair, and this is currently under way.

Second, as far as questions on a specific case, hon. members are aware, as are all Canadians, that there is a principle of confidentiality that has to be respected. No comments can therefore be made about the CINAR case.

It is also obvious that, when questions such as these are raised about a given company, the customs and revenue agency does its job.

• (1455)

[English]

TAXATION

Hon. Lorne Nystrom (Regina—Qu'Appelle, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance.

Today is the one year anniversary of the House passing my private member's bill calling on the government to enact in concert with other countries a tax on currency speculation, the so-called Tobin tax.

Will the minister tell us what he intends to do to further the idea of the Tobin tax around the world? More specifically, if he is still the Minister of Finance in the fall, will he put this at the top of the agenda in terms of Canada's item at the G-20 summit that he is about to host?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, the idea of the Tobin tax passed by most members of the House and certainly by all members on this side of the House has been raised on numerous occasions at G-7 meetings and the IMF.

Unfortunately a number of the major financial markets do not support the plan, albeit we will continue to work on it. That being said, the G-20 is the ideal forum to deal with the many ways of dealing with speculation and that is what we will be doing at the meeting. I will be delighted to report to the hon. member if he is still a member of parliament in the fall.

* * *

FISHERIES

Mr. Mark Muisse (West Nova, PC): Mr. Speaker, spring has arrived yet the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans has failed in his promise to negotiate a plan to regulate the Atlantic fishery.

Can the minister tell us how he intends to regulate a native food fishery so that we do not encounter the same abuses we have encountered in the past?

Hon. Harbance Singh Dhaliwal (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are regulating the fishery at this time. If there is any unauthorized fishing, we will take enforcement action as we have been taking it. It is the same with the food fishery. We will ensure that we enforce the food fishery and if there is a food fishery it will remain a food fishery. We will ensure that we have appropriate enforcement to ensure that there will be no unauthorized fishing. We will have enforcement to back that up.

*Oral Questions***THE ENVIRONMENT**

Mr. Julian Reed (Halton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of the Environment is attending Globe 2000 in Vancouver this week, one of the world's most prestigious business and environment events.

Can the parliamentary secretary assure Canadians that the Minister of the Environment will take advantage of the presence of policymakers from around the world to encourage action abroad?

Ms. Paddy Torsney (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Globe 2000 provides a unique opportunity for Canadian governments and businesses to showcase their initiatives in the area of climate change particularly to demonstrate that Canada is taking a lead role in meeting the challenges with climate change technologies.

We have talented individuals who are meeting that challenge. Canada is taking the lead to create solutions to meet the diversity of challenges in achieving economic growth and the long term environmental health of the whole world.

* * *

HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Grant McNally (Dewdney—Alouette, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, while the minister speaks about transparency, we can see right through her. The minister has HRDC audits sitting on her shelf, yet she refuses to release them. She is ignoring ATI guidelines. She is ignoring Treasury Board guidelines. This can hardly be described as transparent. Why will she not simply release this information immediately?

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member gives me the chance to yet again remind the House of the 10,000 pages of information that were provided in the interests of transparency and openness.

It is my department that made the internal audit public. It is Reform researchers who talk about the Department of Human Resources Development as being a model under the access to information system.

I must say that we have had 300 requests for information since the beginning of the year. My department is working very hard to accommodate the interests of those and we will have the information available as soon as we can.

* * *

[Translation]

IRAQ

Mrs. Maud Debie (Laval East, BQ): Mr. Speaker, a Canadian mission just back from Iraq has told us that the international

embargo and sanctions against this country are a source of unnecessary suffering for the population and are allowing the Iraqi regime to profit from a black market that has very quickly sprung up.

My question is for the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Given these facts, and given that Canada is slow to take a clear stand on this issue, when is the government going to show some leadership so that the security council will reconsider this embargo, which is not attaining its objectives?

• (1500)

[English]

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government has taken a leadership role. We have commissioned a major study of the broad application of sanctions by the International Peace Academy.

We will be tabling that report at the United Nations in early April. We have also reserved during the month of April, when we are president of the council, that we will have a broad ranging review of the application of sanctions by the security council.

* * *

NATIONAL PARKS

Mr. Dennis Gruending (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the report from the panel on the ecological integrity of Canada's national parks repeated what Canadians have known for years, and that is that our parks are in jeopardy.

This summer Canadians want to be greeted by Parks Canada personnel at the gates, to be educated by guides in the parks and to know that there will be water in the showers.

Will this be the vacation memory shared by millions of Canadians or will we see closed facilities and Liberal promises for yet another year?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the recommendations of the report on ecological integrity is that not only do we need interpreters to explore with us the ecosystems of the parks but we also need to return to the park a sense of the aboriginal presence which has been in those lands for 4,000 years and which today is not present in the park system.

I am very pleased with the recommendations of the report that call for a stronger interconnection between aboriginal peoples, interpretation of aboriginal history and also interpretation of ecological integrity, which should be part of the shared parks experience that people will get this summer when they go to our parks.

*Business of the House***PRESENCE IN GALLERY**

The Speaker: I draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in our gallery of the seven recipients of the first Governor General's awards in visual and media arts.

[Translation]

We offer our heartiest congratulations to these very talented artists.

[English]

I invite members to join them at a reception in my Chambers at the end of question period.

I introduce to you Jocelyne Allouche, Ghitta Caiserman-Roth, John Chalke, Jacques Giraldeau, John Scott, Michael Snow and Doris Shadbolt.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Today in question period, after two questions, one by the member for Wanuskewin and the other one from the member for Athabasca, you ruled that the questions were out of order and moved on to other orders of the day.

However, I refer you to a decision made by James Jerome. I have his book. He made a decision on February 20, 1975, when a member of parliament felt that a law had been broken and tried to raise it as a question of privilege.

• (1505)

At that time the Speaker made this ruling:

Since there is a clear line of administrative responsibility, grievances of this type are not points of privilege but should be brought before the House and laid before the minister for the minister to answer because this was in the best public interest and both members of parliament and the public had the right to be informed of them.

It seems to me that there is a clear line of ministerial responsibility when we feel that a law has been broken or compromised that we bring it forward in a question before the minister and have the minister answer that question in the House.

The Speaker: I agree that you should be able to bring forth whatever issues you want. All colleagues will know that many times in question period it is not only the words but it is the tone of the voice, the reaction and the accusation. That is what I have to base my decision on in the heat of battle. Therefore, today I made

this decision that stands for today. Mr. Jerome made another decision in his time.

I have said many times in that there are no words which of themselves are unparliamentary. I told you we can use the word liar, for example, if you say "I was called a liar". But there is no need to explain it. I have to have a little room in order to keep the question period so that we can hear the questions and the answers and so that the question period moves along. Did I make mistakes? Yes, like anyone else. Was I too quick? Perhaps, but it is the decision I have made and I stay with it, with respect.

* * *

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, could the government House leader tell us what is on the agenda for the remainder of this week and for next week?

Hon. Don Boudria (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his excellent question. I might add that it is the best one I have heard today.

I would like to inform the House that, this afternoon, we hope to complete second reading of Bill C-16, the Canadian citizenship bill. We do not intend to proceed with Bill C-19 this afternoon. When we are done with Bill C-16, we will not call the next bill listed on the projected order of business. We will not deal with Bill C-19 this afternoon.

Tomorrow, we will consider Bill C-10, the municipal grants bill, at third reading, as well as Bill C-12, the labour bill. Regarding the latter, there have been discussions among the parties earlier.

Next Monday will be the third day of the budget debate.

Tuesday, we will proceed with third reading of Bill C-13, the institutes of health research bill, and second reading of Bill C-22, the money laundering bill.

Wednesday will be the last day of the budget debate.

Next Thursday, we will consider the Senate amendments to Bill C-6, the electronic commerce bill.

After negotiations among the parties, we may decide to switch the order between Wednesday and Thursday. We may therefore be dealing with Bill C-6 on Wednesday and completing the budget debate on Thursday.

That is the agenda for next week.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

CITIZENSHIP OF CANADA ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-16, an act respecting Canadian Citizenship, be now read a second time and referred to a committee.

• (1510)

[English]

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by summarizing somewhat.

I did start my remarks with a statement that in my belief there is no higher honour one can have than that of being a citizen in a democracy. I mean that quite sincerely. I believe that all Canadians value that in their lives as indicated by the fact that we had an overwhelming outpouring of representations by Canadians to the citizenship committee on this bill. Thirty-seven presenters brought forward their points of view and many of those points made it into the actual bill and now form what we know as Bill C-16.

I did make the connection between the concept of citizenship and the building of community. There are really three things: the idea that a citizen is part of something larger, the sense of community, and how we in the New Democratic Party view that sense as being at risk somewhat in a day that champions the individual, it seems, more than the collective. Operating as a collective is much more a Canadian point of view. Canadians make that connection and value citizenship.

The bill that we are looking at today started life as Bill C-63. Most of Bill C-63 is still contained in Bill C-16. We brought recommendations forward at the various stages of Bill C-63 hoping to improve the bill because many of the groups that came to see us on Bill C-63 were not entirely enamoured with the bill as it stood. They had serious reservations about aspects of the bill and as is proper, they brought those concerns to the committee. We listened carefully. We tried to make meaningful amendments to try to satisfy some of their concerns. As it stands, we believe that Bill C-16 is an improved version of Bill C-63.

The real point that has been made today by other speakers as well is that we would like to get on with this bill. We would like to finish with debate on the bill and get it back to committee. We

Government Orders

would get through the final stages and put it to bed because most Canadians are quite anxious to address other immigration and refugee matters, issues other than Bill C-16.

Citizenship as such deals with people who have already landed in the country, who have already made it to our shores and have settled in for a number of years and are now at that final stage of becoming a new Canadian and going through the act of getting their citizenship papers.

The real concern that most Canadians are bringing to my attention as the critic for the NDP is the much broader issue of immigration to Canada. How do we attract the right new Canadians to this country to help us grow the economy and help the country grow? How do we seek out and find these people? How do we convince them that Canada is the country they should come to? There is growing competition around the world for the skilled workers of the world and certainly we need to do more outreach than we have done in the past in terms of reaching out to people and offering what we have to offer in a very public way. We have to advertise and promote ourselves if we are to attract more people to these shores.

I made the point earlier that we in the New Democratic Party believe that immigration is an engine of economic growth. We would like to see more immigration to this country and we are very critical of those in the country and some in the House of Commons who would argue that we should close the doors now on immigration. This is an attitude that has been largely driven by fear or ignorance, I would say, and fear generated by some of the recent events of this summer which saw migrant boat people drifting up on our shore on the west coast.

If I could take one moment just to talk about that one subject. It has been a source of great frustration to me as this whole issue got blown so badly out of proportion. There were 500 or 600 desperate Chinese migrants who landed on our shores looking for safe refuge, looking for sanctuary, looking for a better life. The reaction of certain Canadians was "Oh my goodness, our borders are a sieve, it is a threat to national security in some way, we have to slam the door shut and lock these people up and send them back". In fact, the Reform Party had a public press conference when the first boat landed and said that we should send them back without even a hearing, that we should just simply put them on another boat and send them back where they came from without any knowledge of what their circumstances were or if there could have been legitimate refugee claims.

• (1515)

Thankfully, this country has better policies than that and our policy is that everyone deserves the right to a full hearing, the right to counsel and the right to have their case heard. Some will be eligible and some will not.

Government Orders

We in the New Democratic Party went a bit further. We wanted to understand a little bit more about this idea of the migration of people throughout the world. It is getting to be very common for people to seek better economic situations and to move around the globe. We did a bit of research on the Fujian province, from where these people originated. We learned that the Fujian province is one of the first places in China that had what we call free economic trade zones.

I spoke earlier in my speech about the globalization of capital threatening the concepts of citizenship, the nation-state and democracy. Here is a graphic illustration in these free economic trade zones.

The ILO did some research to say that one should be making about 85 cents an hour in these trade zones to have a standard of living comparable to a working class Chinese person in that area. These trade zones, where all kinds of western goods, such as clothing and toys, are manufactured, pay on the average 18 cents an hour. Here are these people making western products for you and I and our children to enjoy who are making one-fifth of what it takes to have the standard of living of a Chinese peasant in a fenced compound in China and having some knowledge of the western world, that there is a better world out there.

Their motivation, I suppose, was to elevate their standard of wages and working conditions by getting out of there, but there was no legitimate way to get to some place like Canada, to get to the west. There is only one place to go to get papers to apply for a Canadian visa or a permit to come to Canada and that is in Beijing. It is a heck of a long way from the Fujian province. They cannot get here from there. There is no legitimate way for them to apply to come to Canada and, under the current rules, they probably would not qualify anyway.

When we know a little bit more about the people who wound up on the shores of B.C., we are a little less threatened by them. The fear and the ignorance will hopefully dissipate as the story really gets out on who these people are and how we should really be dealing with them. I wanted to speak to that a little bit as we do get calls. Even as recently as today, we got faxes from Canadians who are not as open-minded about this issue. I hope the truth is finally getting out.

We have been dealing with the estimates, the spending of the government and various aspects of government. I would hope that as we get through the estimates regarding the immigration department that more money is put toward the promotion of immigration than it is toward the enforcement of immigration rules, which are really designed to keep people out.

It has always been of great frustration to our caucus that much of the energies and resources of the immigration officials and bureaucracy are dedicated to keeping people out of the country and not to welcoming them in. It sends absolutely the wrong message. The

more barriers, obstacles and roadblocks we put in the way of people who are coming or who seek to make Canada their home, the more the message spreads out around the world that it is a difficult place to come to, that they will be frustrated and that it will not be easy. They will then go someplace else.

If we are serious about building this country, we had better change that perception. That means some resources will need to be spent in specifically targeted parts of the world where we know workers with the skills we need reside. We can invite and attract them and promote this country so that they choose to come here and make Canada their home.

With regard to the citizenship bill, in the last minute or two that I have I will deal with some of the specifics and some of the reservations we have about Bill C-16. We are eager to see it go back to the committee so that we can deal with it in further depth and we can hear a few more groups make representation to us to see what they think about its current form as opposed to its format under the former Bill C-63.

One of the things raised at length by the member of the Bloc Québécois was that there was some objection to having the Queen referenced in the citizenship oath. Frankly, I think that is a matter so minor and insignificant that it does not even warrant comment in the House of Commons. Surely we have better things to dwell on than an issue such as that, but we did hear quite a bit of debate on that subject from other speakers.

• (1520)

There was some really serious concern that the abolition of the citizenship judges would be a step backward if they were replaced with citizenship commissioners in terms of getting a fair adjudication. This work would now be done by bureaucrats who may not have the same abilities to weigh the variables in a complicated citizenship case.

We also believe that the citizenship tests should be available in either official language and, if translation is needed, it should be available. I believe that has been addressed and we are happy to see it.

I have one remaining point that I need to comment on. We believe that the rules regarding the actual physical presence of a person in this country are too stringent. Under the current rules, one has to be physically present for three of the last six years before citizenship papers are granted. We believe that places an undue burden on those who may have interests outside the country and who may often need to travel outside the country to take care of their business interests elsewhere. We would like to see that addressed at the committee stage and we will soon have an opportunity to do so.

Mr. David Price (Compton—Stanstead, PC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today to Bill C-16, the citizenship act, and my comments will be multifaceted.

Government Orders

I will speak first on some of my experiences in Africa a couple of weeks ago, then address the timing of the bill and then highlight a few of the many issues that the department has ignored for far too long. I will also, of course, speak to the bill itself.

Before I proceed on those topics, I want to affirm that my party is a proponent of immigration and citizenship. We support individuals receiving citizenship and enjoying the many privileges of being Canadian. We have always valued and cherished the contributions that newcomers make to our society.

Four hundred years ago Europeans joined aboriginals already living here to begin building this country we call Canada today. Since that time, persons from every corner of the globe have moved to Canada and have enriched our society with their knowledge, talents and culture.

We do believe in balancing the welcoming of refugees and immigrants with ensuring a fair system. Related to that, I wish to provide some clarifications.

Aboriginals aside, we were all immigrants or refugees. All refugees are immigrants but not all immigrants are refugees. This is not clearing things up very well is it? I will try to clarify it a bit more.

The legal definition of refugee in Canada follows the convention refugee of the United Nations, which states:

“Convention refugee” means any person who

(a) by reason of a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion,

An immigrant is legally defined as a person who seeks landing. In other words, an immigrant is someone who leaves his or her country with the intention of living in Canada.

Now that I have furnished the House with these definitions, I wish to provide some context for the definitions.

As I said, I was recently on a trip to Africa and I had a chance to sit in on some interviews with potential Canadian citizens. I will talk about one in particular, which was a rather heart-rending story. It involves a young lady, around 18 years old, who came from Sudan. She lived in a city where her father was killed by rebels when she was 11 years old. She lived with her mother and two brothers. The city was being bombed. Rebels were on the outside. This family was told they had to leave the city. In leaving the city, she was separated from her mother and brothers and has never seen them since. She was able to find someone at a church who put her up for a while and then found her a foster home in Nairobi. At that home she was sexually abused. She finally got away from that and laid claim for refugee status at the United Nations. That was how she came to the Canadian immigration office to make application as a refugee.

• (1525)

When she came into the office her dossier said that she spoke English. However, in questioning her, we had a hard time getting her to say anything. It was basically yeses and noes. At that point, the immigration officer asked her to write down something. She took a piece of paper and a pencil and easily wrote a beautiful, one paragraph account. After that, the immigration officer asked her to do a couple of math questions and she had no problem at all. Then she started to open up a little bit and we found that she did speak English very well. She spoke, read and wrote English.

We then found out that she had only about five years of schooling; about two and a half years in primary school and about the same in secondary school. During that time her mother tongue was Arabic. She spoke, wrote and read Arabic. We know she spoke, wrote and read English. She also spoke two other languages fluently, with only five years of education. As members can see, this person, with the few opportunities she has had in life, was able to develop. This is the type of person would probably be an excellent Canadian citizen.

While I was in Nairobi, I had the chance to visit the orientation training school for the refugees who were coming to Canada. I have to say that I was a little nervous with these people because I felt most of them knew more about Canada than I did. Refugees from that area who are trying to come Canada usually spend from two to three months getting a little training about what Canada is all about and what they can expect when they get here. I have to say that from what I saw they were doing an excellent job.

I also had a chance to sit in on an immigrant interview. This was a young man and his wife learning a lesson about how difficult it was to come to Canada as an immigrant. We do have some major problems in that system.

This young gentleman was an aeronautics engineer with five years of university but his profession was not recognized in Canada, even though we have a need for aeronautics engineers in Canada and our point system indicates they would get preference. In order for this young gentleman to get in he was applying as an aircraft mechanic. With our point system, there is not a large need for aircraft mechanics and, unfortunately, this gentleman will be refused. It is too bad because this is a young family with good possibilities.

Our point system needs to be updated. We do not move fast enough as the changes come about in the workforce to do what is needed in Canada.

On a final point about the trip, I want to recognize that the high commissioners and immigration staff face many mental and physical challenges in foreign lands. They do the very best they can in the conditions they work in. For that I applaud them.

Government Orders

I now wish to turn to the timing of this bill. The bill is important but at this point in our history there are far more serious problems to deal with in the Department of Citizenship and Immigration.

Last summer 599 illegal immigrants arrived on the west coast by boat. Six hundred arrivals at once places an enormous strain on Canadian taxpayers who must support these migrants, provide legal aid, shelter and health care. Such an arrival also infuriates those who have tried to enter Canada the conventional way, such as those I have just described. They encounter far too many delays in the immigration process.

• (1530)

Just last month the provinces of Ontario, Quebec and British Columbia called on the federal government to reduce the backlogs in immigration inventories. Refugees and immigrants alike need to wait unnecessarily long for their claims to be processed, while it is the provinces which must pay for social assistance, legal aid, health care and housing.

The minister's response to this common front was that Ontario should reduce its taxes. Reducing taxes will not ease the strains of the Immigration and Refugee Board.

During the month of January a container ship with stowaways arrived in British Columbia. Almost every week in January illegal immigrants were found somewhere in the province of Ontario.

Another point I would like to speak to is our foreign students and the missed opportunities because of the stringent rules on those students. We look for students. We bring in roughly 30,000 a year to attend our different universities. These students pay double the tuition that our students pay. They learn the language when they are here, if they do not know it before they arrive. They are immersed in our culture. Most of them stay four years, some five, and then they are allowed to work in the country for one year. They then have to leave if they want to apply to get back into the country. We do not actively go after them, and that is unfortunate, because the Americans go after them and the Australians go after them. We end up losing these people. Indirectly, we have a chance for a brain gain, but we are suffering again from brain drain.

This winter has seen heartsick worry in cancer wards in Ontario. The province has been suffering from a shortage of radiation therapists. The provincial government has been recruiting foreign therapists, but this initiative has become snagged in immigration red tape. The processing times for these therapists takes far too long. Waiting times for cancer patients are dangerous. Delays allow this fatal illness to spread to other parts of the body. These are just a few of the issues which CIC has had before it over the last eight months.

Similarly, there are a few issues which CIC has ineffectively dealt with. As a matter of fact, last year the minister and the Prime Minister said that the winter months would discourage migration

from overseas countries. Of course, that was absurd and cowardly, and it meant to defend the integrity of our Canadian society.

Canadians, the provinces and this party want attention focused on the serious issues. We are speaking of our borders, entities which we have the responsibility, indeed the right, to defend. We are a sovereign nation and we should be able to decide who is admitted to Canada and how they are admitted.

A new citizenship bill would not solve our border problems, would not speed up our processing time for radiation therapists and could not provide us with a new way of dealing fairly with non-status migrants arriving on our shores. A new citizenship act would not provide additional resources for customs agents who are required to safeguard our borders.

In my own riding I have seven border crossings. It is a problem we deal with every day. We do not have enough immigration officials. We understand that the first line at our borders is our customs officers. Our customs officers are not equipped, quite frankly. They have just been given a certain amount of power. They have been given the right of arrest, but they have no arms and no special training. They are taking some test cases, but I think our criminals will quite easily find which border crossings are covered and which are not, and we know what will happen.

At this point the minister has advanced no solutions and, most important, she has not tabled the new immigration bill to begin the process of dealing with these problems and concerns. I understand, due to departmental leaks, that a new bill is on its way. I just do not understand why it is taking so long.

The former minister was all set to forge ahead with a new act last year, but a cabinet shuffle seemed to postpone the legislation, and I cannot grasp why. I know it would take some time to study the bill, but in 1998-99 citizenship and immigration launched reviews and consultations costing \$1.76 million. These studies have been done. Why have we not seen the results? Why has it taken the department so long to release this new bill?

• (1535)

I am disappointed that it has taken so much money and time for a new piece of immigration legislation, but I will not press this point further. There are parts of Bill C-16 which I wish to address.

Bill C-16 demands that permanent residents spend three years out of six in Canada. That is 1095 days. It assures that permanent residents need to display and prove their legitimacy in becoming Canadians, but how would this be enforced with any authority? How would permanent residents prove with any credibility that they have spent the required time in the country? How could Canadians be sure that this clause of Bill C-16 was respected? Exit controls do not exist in Canada for non-residents. However, we do not know when non-residents are in our country.

Government Orders

A pilot project was launched in southern Ontario this winter, whereby all refugee claimants were given identification cards. The whole issue of these identification cards has been shrouded in a veil of secrecy. Why did the minister not discuss this with parliament? Perhaps it would be a good idea to use these cards as exit controls for refugee claimants. Neither the standing committee nor the House had any input in the present usage of cards or any potential usage such as exit controls.

We praise the move that would make it easier for children adopted from other countries to become citizens. At present they must go through the immigration process and require permanent residency. First and foremost, this modification would hopefully have the effect of helping children abroad who are living in poverty or unacceptable conditions. It would also hopefully free up resources at CIC. Our only concern in this regard is that adequate health checks would be completed on new arrivals.

I do not understand why it has taken the government so long to allow these provisions for children abroad. The PC Party has been demanding these changes to overseas adoption for a long time. The minister should have acted much sooner.

The next topic I wish to cover in relation to Bill C-16 is its coming into force. The bill would apply to every man, woman and child in the queue for the citizenship ceremony. Bill C-16 is not retroactive, with only one exception, for cases sent to the citizenship judge. For the most part, when it comes into effect all applicants will fall under the new law. Why is this? What kind of overlap and additional paperwork would this cause? Would the minister please explain the thinking behind this part of the bill?

On a final point related to the Citizenship Act, I wish to comment on the appointment process of proposed citizenship commissioners who will replace citizenship judges. These citizenship commissioners will be appointed by orders in council. We wish to see this method of appointment changed to guarantee that confident, experienced individuals are chosen for the position of commissioner.

Various witnesses appearing before the standing committee expressed concern about partisan appointments at CIC. Professor François Crépeau and France Houle proposed four recommendations for ensuring competent individuals to fill jobs at CIC. It is worth my time to highlight some of these recommendations.

The first recommendation was that candidates should be hired for eight years with a one year probation period. Candidates must not be renewable and candidates must be staggered. This would ensure constant new blood in a stressful field.

The second recommendation was that candidates must have a knowledge of refugee law, a knowledge of the politics of the

country of origin and psychological capabilities to deal with refugees and their situations.

The third recommendation was that a selection committee should be put in place to ensure that competent employees would be hired to the IRB. This committee would be composed of individuals from the immigration, refugee and law fields.

The fourth recommendation was that candidatures must be open to all and must be made public. The selection committee would have to follow strict guidelines, such as being familiar with the candidates' portfolios and a majority must agree on a candidate.

Our party has been calling for a more transparent hiring process for a long time. One needs only to glance at our platform from the 1997 election to see that. Today, as I have in the House before, I call on the minister to take the high road and ensure that competent and not necessarily partisan individuals are appointed to positions within CIC.

• (1540)

Professor Crépeau happens to be a professor in Montreal. The government should look to the province of Quebec more often for its immigration policies. I am speaking in particular about the Quebec investor program. Quebec is the only province in Canada to run its own program. The federal government administers provisions for business immigrants for the rest of the country.

The federal program has failed miserably. Why does the minister not look at Quebec's quasi-guarantees and financing options for business immigrants? Quebec also has the lowest corporate taxes in North America. Is it any wonder that the province's plan has worked so well?

Citizenship is of prime importance. It identifies us as belonging to a certain group of individuals, to a society, to a country. Citizenship is perennial in providing a sense of community. This is not a novel concept. Citizenship was a prized entity among ancient Greeks and Romans. I do not often agree with the minister, but she is correct in asserting that citizenship is at the heart of what it means to be Canadian. Our party only hopes that she protects the integrity and worth of our citizenship.

Hon. Elinor Caplan (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have had the opportunity to be in the House today to listen to my critic, the member for Compton—Stanstead, as well as the member for Winnipeg Centre.

While I would say that I do not agree with everything they had to say, and I know they are not surprised to hear that, I wanted to take a moment to thank the member for Compton—Stanstead for acknowledging the hard work of the high commission and immigration officers.

Government Orders

I would also acknowledge the fact that I too had a chance to sit in on interviews in our posts abroad and I know the dedication of the staff. I think it was very important for that to be acknowledged in the House.

The hon. member made one point that I would like to comment on, and that is the fact that he has been waiting for a new immigration and refugee protection bill. He said that the Citizenship Act was not as important as the other and wondered why he had not yet seen an immigration bill.

I point out to him that the government has said that a new immigration act is a priority. A white paper was issued in January 1999. More than that, as a member of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, he would know that the committee tabled its report yesterday. I want to point out to him that I have been anxiously awaiting that report, because the committee's work in this area has been extremely important in helping to define the policy.

I understand that the member opposite made important and valuable contributions during the work of the committee on that report, and I want to assure him and all members of the House that I will be taking into consideration the recommendations of the committee in the development of a new bill, which I hope to see tabled in the House as soon as possible.

I agree that citizenship is at the heart of what it means to be a Canadian, and Bill C-16 is a very important bill to Canadians and to future Canadians.

I am pleased to comment on the members' speeches and to acknowledge the expertise and interest which they have had in this very important issue concerning citizenship and immigration and refugee policy.

The member for Winnipeg Centre, the member for Compton—Stanstead, the member for Rosemont and even my critic from the Reform Party play a very important role on the committee, as does my parliamentary secretary and the other members. I appreciate their advice and I look forward to being at committee to defend Bill C-16 in the very near future, as soon as the House sees fit to send it to committee.

I have been listening very carefully to the debate. We will take into consideration the representations made by all of those who have taken the opportunity to speak to the bill and we will look very carefully at the representations of others when we are at committee. I expect the committee will hear witnesses.

● (1545)

It has been a long road for Bill C-16 and its predecessor Bill C-63. It is very important that this bill proceed. I am pleased to

stand in my place today to acknowledge the important work that has been done on this bill. I hope to see it become a reality soon.

Mr. David Price: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for her comments. I guess I would have to say, though, that last October the former minister promised us that a bill would be on the table. Had the bill come forward at that time naturally it would have gone into committee. Then we would have been able to work on it and get some of the amendments in that we wanted.

As we have heard recently, the critic from the Reform Party had a press conference and released a supposed draft bill. We have seen what was in that bill, so it will be easy to compare now to ensure the work we have done in committee gets into it.

I had a couple of interesting amendments which I was able to get in, such as asking for photos and prints on first contact, for which a lot of our witnesses had asked. Something that will come back to the House is the fact that we have had in the immigration law for quite a while now what we call a safe third country. Not very much has been done in the negotiations with other countries in this regard.

The amendment I put in asked that this be reported back to the House on a yearly basis so we could see if there were advancement in the file. To that point a lot of people did not even realize it was in the law and not much was being done about it.

Mr. Gurmant Grewal (Surrey Central, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the people of Surrey Central to encourage the government to adopt amendments to Bill C-16, an act respecting Canadian citizenship. The legislation proposes to make several changes to the current act, with the intention of providing more clearly defined guidelines, upgrading sections and replacing current procedures with a new administrative structure.

There are some more clearly defined parts in the bill. I like to give credit where credit is due, even if it is a little. The bill reached report stage and third reading before the end of the first session but it has yet to be passed. There are only four changes to the bill, despite committee hearings and a debate in the House.

The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration mentioned in her speech on February 3 that during public consultations on legislative review the main focus of the people with whom she met was immigration. Why has the minister chosen to do nothing on the present inefficient immigration legislation? Instead she has chosen to fiddle with the citizenship act, which reminds us of the typical Liberal way of doing things, merely tinkering with the law.

She also mentioned in her speech on Bill C-63, the act respecting Canadian citizenship, that the primary mission in her department was to contribute to building a stronger Canada. I am wondering if

Government Orders

by bungling a billion dollars in HRDC the government makes Canada stronger or weaker.

The arrogant Liberal government uses departments for slush funds to give away grants and contributions like CIDA, CIDA Inc., western economic diversification, ACOA, Indian and northern affairs, heritage and many others. I will not go into that but I wanted to make the point. With its political interference, poor accountability and mismanagement, this weak Liberal government is weakening Canada and certainly not making it stronger.

• (1550)

By increasing taxes to death, does the government make or break families? By being given broad based tax relief families can be strengthened. Strong families make strong communities and strong communities make a strong nation. Having said that, I would like to go into the nitty-gritty of the bill.

The four changes made in this legislation by the Liberals between the first and second sessions of this parliament are as follows. The first is physical presence. According to clause 6, the time requirement for physical presence in Canada as pertaining to applications for citizenship has been changed from three years out of five to three years out of six. This is a positive change. It will allow people who travel on business a greater opportunity and incentive to make Canada their home, and we appreciate that.

The second is presence in terms of spousal considerations in subclause 19(2). This clause has been removed from Bill C-16. It would have allowed spouses of those employed by the federal or provincial governments outside Canada, for example the military, diplomats, et cetera, to collect time toward citizenship. In effect, when posted outside Canada they would be considered to be residing in Canada if living with a spouse while he or she, as the case may be, was working outside our country, maybe for the government in this case.

This is a negative change because the clause presented an equality problem. The spouses of those employed by private businesses were not given the same opportunity. This is valid only for government employees. What about those who are employed by companies that have their head offices in Canada but have to spend time outside the country?

The third is the definition of spouse. The clause allowing the minister to determine the definition of a spouse has been removed from Bill C-16. This is another positive change.

The fourth is a response to the Mennonites in clause 57. In response to lobbying by the Mennonites clause 57 has been added to Bill C-16. This clause will allow three generations of descendants of a Canadian citizen who have never lived in Canada to apply for citizenship for a period of three years from the time the

legislation is passed. Is this not amazing? It goes to show that no one is treated equally by the government.

Those four items are the limit of the changes the Liberals have made to the bill. The government is weak. The minister received the recommendations of the government dominated Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration in 1994. The government has taken over five years to prepare this legislation which still does not address the committee's key recommendations. The Liberals do not listen to anyone. They do as they please and still there are many problems with the bill. Let me go over some of them.

Citizenship at birth is in subclauses 4(1) to 4(4). Bill C-16 states in effect that all children born in Canada, except of course the children of foreign diplomats, will continue to automatically acquire Canadian citizenship regardless of the immigration or citizenship status in Canada of their parents. This is contrary to what the standing committee heard. This is contrary to what the departmental officials stated and this is contrary to the position of the official opposition and many other Canadians who support it.

• (1555)

The official opposition supports an immigration and citizenship policy that requires children born in Canada to take the citizenship of their parents. Only children born in Canada to landed immigrants would assume Canadian citizenship.

Another problem is the conditions for granting citizenship. First, subclause 6(1)(b) deals with presence in Canada. Bill C-16 defines the term permanent resident more concisely than does the current act. The existing legislation may be loosely interpreted. Some individuals have been found to be residing in Canada because they had a bank account here or they owned property in Canada without having actually resided on Canadian soil.

How could someone be a resident when not residing in Canada? Bill C-16 calls for 1,095 days of physical presence in Canada in the six years preceding application for citizenship. Bill C-16 does not provide any mechanism for determining when applicants arrive in Canada or when they leave. That is the root cause of the problem when we do not know when and how someone left the country or through what channels someone came to Canada.

The next one is penalties for bureaucratic delays in subclause 6(1)(b). The current act allows individuals whose claim for refugee status is approved to count each full day of residency in Canada from the date of application as a half day toward the total needed for their citizenship application requirement. Bill C-16 removes this provision so that applicants will now be penalized for the system's bureaucratic delays even when the delays are no fault of the applicant.

Government Orders

Another one is redefining the family in clause 43. Bill C-16 grants the minister the power for what constitutes a relationship between parent and child. That is wrong. The next one is the famous one, blatant patronage in clauses 31 and 32. Bill C-16 maintains the tradition of patronage appointments.

The Liberals are famous for patronage appointments. Probably they have broken all records in history. Here again they do that. All citizenship judges will have all their duties taken over by departmental officials except for ceremonial duties. There is room for appointing someone for doing some favour for the Liberal Party, the governing party in this case.

Another one is language requirements to gain citizenship in clause 6. This is a very important one. I have had many calls on this point in my office because my constituency of Surrey Central has more of an immigrant population than any other constituency in Canada. It is the largest constituency in Canada in terms of population.

Bill C-16 states that the applicant must have an adequate knowledge of one of the official languages of Canada. No provisions are included on how this is to be judged or by whom it will be judged. Being a good citizen has nothing to do with language skills or how many languages one can speak. Being a citizen means one obeys the laws and makes a positive contribution to society.

How about those who are unfortunate, who are mute, deaf or blind? How will they pass that test? I understand it is important that someone should be able to effectively communicate, but I have seen examples of people in this country who could not speak a word of English or French but are now fluent, excellent in business and have made tremendous contributions to Canadian society and to our communities.

Another one is the citizenship oath in clause 34 of the bill. There was little public input on the content of the new oath in Bill C-16. The minister prepared this oath on her own. She did not consult anyone in Canada on what the wording of the oath should be. She ignored listening to Canadians.

• (1600)

The minister's first legislation should have been aimed at fixing a failed immigration system rather than tinkering with the citizenship act at this time. More than five years after the Liberal controlled and dominated standing committee made its recommendation on citizenship, the minister retabled the legislation. It delivers little of what was recommended by the committee. She chose not to listen to Canadians. She chose to ignore the official opposition and other parties in the House.

With globalization and advancement in technology, transport and telecommunications, in an ideal world the boundaries of countries could disappear for the purpose of mobility of the people. There should be peace, prosperity and harmony but this wonderful

dream has not yet been fulfilled. I believe it will be fulfilled sometime down the road.

The biggest curse the world has is our inability to see humanity in all of us. Among us are those who do not respect law and order, those who know only their rights and not their responsibilities. There are criminals and terrorists unfortunately.

We have to take appropriate measures to protect our citizens and secure their safety and future. We have to make Canada a better place. It should not be a sieve where terrorists and criminals pass through and jeopardize the safety and security of our citizens and the future of this great country. Therefore our legislation should be carefully crafted and drafted.

The new changes to the Immigration Act the government will propose have been leaked to the official opposition immigration critic. The Canadian public is already very concerned about how badly the Liberals are going to fail in giving us what we want which is to fix the flawed and broken immigration and refugee system in this case.

I am sure members and all Canadians are concerned about refugees coming here in boats but Ottawa is missing the boat on refugees. The proposed changes to the Immigration Act will not do anything to fix the many faults with Canada's refugee adjudication process. The new rules will erode public support for real refugees. Who will suffer? The genuine refugees.

Changes to the Immigration Act contemplated by the immigration minister will not streamline the refugee adjudication process. They will not do anything to fix that. They will not stop bogus claimants from clogging the system. The pipeline is clogged. Genuine refugees are already suffering. The cost of processing applicants should be reduced but it will go up because more people, bogus refugees, criminals and terrorists are involved. We have to do more work to scrutinize them. They will not discourage human smuggling. Erosion of public support for genuine refugees is the likely outcome of Bill C-16.

The United Nations convention on refugees states that countries should accept those who have "a valid founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion". The Minister of Citizen and Immigration proposes to expand the definition of refugees to include a new category five, "people in need of protection". This extended definition could lead to more dubious refugee claims.

• (1605)

A 1998 government report called for an end to patronage appointments to the Immigration and Refugee Board. It urged Ottawa to appoint experienced bureaucrats to adjudicate refugee hearings despite the fact that immigration department officials

could do a more effective job than inexperienced political appointees. Again the minister chose to ignore this recommendation.

Another level of appeal has been added that will clog the system even more. According to the act, unsuccessful claimants will not be removed from the country. Also no deterrent is in place for human smugglers. Between 1995 and 1998 only 14 smuggling charges were laid. The maximum fine was \$4,000 and no one served a single day in jail. That is surprising.

This legislation is supposed to define the criteria for obtaining the world's most respected citizenship, Canadian citizenship. Our citizenship is the very foundation of the Canadian identity which unites us from coast to coast to coast.

To summarize, let me go over some of the points because they are interesting.

Another level of appeal has been added to the system and it will clog the system. The existing system along with its several rounds of appeal has already created a backlog of 30,000 refugee claimants. Rather than streamline the appeal process, this bill adds another level of appeal. There are already many layers. It is like an onion; we peel off one layer and there is another layer. We have to stop this onion effect. We have to be focused and have a clear-cut judicial process which should be keen on helping genuine refugees and not bogus refugees.

Recently the Federal Court of Appeal ruled that Canada's obligation to protect its citizens outweighs its obligation to keep suspected foreign terrorists from torture. Under the new legislation which we are debating, if there is a chance of mismanagement upon their return, unsuccessful refugee claimants will not be sent home. They will not be sent back to countries which are deemed unacceptable by the minister. Migrant smugglers are sure to exploit this loophole. We have to plug the loophole.

Under the current legislation, penalties for smuggling range from \$5,000 to \$100,000 as well as prison terms from five to ten years. The bill proposes to strengthen the penalty for smuggling 10 or more illegal immigrants to a maximum fine of \$1 million or life imprisonment. What about when there are batches of nine illegal immigrants? Then the penalties are different and less.

In spite of protestations to the contrary, by drafting the bill before the all-party committee on illegal immigration has made its recommendations, and by planning to introduce the bill on March 30, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration is sending a signal that it is a done deal. That is the Liberal style.

• (1610)

To safeguard genuine refugees and the public interest, the minister should scrap the bill. She should hear what the committee has to say and re-write this legislation.

Government Orders

I mentioned that Canadian citizenship is one of the most respected citizenships in the world. We are proud of this fact. We have to maintain respect for Canadian citizenship. Canadian citizenship is based on equality. One criteria for Canadian citizenship is understanding the equality of all Canadian citizens, but that is not the case with the government.

For example, I tabled some petitions from concerned Canadians, many of which were signed by my constituents but were also signed by people from all across Canada. I received many petitions on this issue. The petitioners, our respected senior citizens in this case, asked the weak Liberal government to treat all seniors equally in the allocation of old age security benefits.

I can understand that there is a difference between immigrants and citizens. To some extent we can probably understand the extent to which the difference exists. But for senior citizens the allocation of old age security benefits depends on the country of origin.

Once a person is a Canadian citizen what does where the person came from or his or her race and ethnicity matter? Why are citizens treated differently based on their country of origin and placed under arbitrary restrictions? These are the questions the petitioners asked of the government. Why does the government treat some citizens as second class citizens? The government through its programs has designated some citizens as hyphenated Canadians based on their race, ethnicity and country of origin.

We are debating the amendments to the citizenship act and it is not clear whether it is the government's intention to dilute Canadian citizenship or create different tiers of Canadians. A Canadian citizen is a Canadian citizen. No Canadian citizen is superior or inferior to another Canadian citizen. This is what equality is all about. All Canadian citizens are Canadian citizens, period.

Should we not integrate new citizens rather than segregate them? The government sponsors the multiculturalism policy, the immigration policy and many other policies. It is bent on segregating Canadians rather than integrating them into Canadian society.

It is appalling that the Secretary of State for Multiculturalism says she is proud to call herself a Trinidad-Canadian. When will a Canadian federal minister be proud to call herself or himself a proud Canadian?

We are all proud of our religion, culture, race, ethnicity and our country of origin. When we have adopted and embraced Canada as our new home, we cannot get mail by writing part of the old address on the envelope. A Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian period, both in French and English and in any other language in the world. A Canadian is a Canadian.

Mr. Philip Mayfield (Cariboo—Chilcotin, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I commend my colleague from Surrey Central for his even-handed

Government Orders

speech. He mentioned not only those aspects of the bill with which he disagrees but also those parts of the bill which he feels strengthens the legislation.

One of the things I did not hear him mention is a problem that I run into frequently in my duties as a member of parliament. We have the so-called brain drain which has certainly affected our country with large numbers of professionals, doctors, nurses, teachers, engineers, chemists, having gone to greener pastures, having left the difficulties created by this government and the previous Tory government for them to practise their professions in this country.

• (1615)

I have dealt with a number of instances where doctors have applied to come to Canada at the invitation of certain medical facilities that are having a great deal of difficulty. In my rural constituency, many hospitals and many communities have lost doctors that they simply cannot replace and there are citizens who do not have the medical service that they require.

What is frustrating is that a hospital or a medical clinic may recruit a doctor from South Africa, England, Ireland or wherever, eminently qualified to perform the services that are needed. However, there is no give in Immigration Canada to provide a way for these people to come without going through sometimes years of application, reapplication and the cost involved with that. The consequence is that doctors in my experience have thrown up their hands and said "This application has gone on long enough".

I want to ask my esteemed colleague if he and the committee have given any thought in this legislation as to how Canada might seek to improve itself by reversing the brain drain by modifying the immigration policies to accommodate this.

Mr. Gurmant Grewal: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the thoughtfulness of the question from my hon. colleague.

I agree with him that our health care system, which I call sickness care system, is in a continuous declining state. There are reasons, and of course the immigration policy could be one of them, but there are other policies of this government as well. The government is responsible for the deteriorating situation of our health care system because it cut \$35 billion from the health care system, even though it tried to put some money back.

It is the cause for the deteriorating health care system. I am sure this weak, arrogant Liberal government owes an apology to Canadians. Not only is it the government's moral responsibility to fix it but it owes an apology to Canadians.

When we look at the billion dollar boondoggle in HRDC and then see in the new budget that more money has gone, \$1.5 billion,

to HRDC rather than to health care, it reminds me that this government is in the habit of not putting the money where its mouth is, but putting the money where its back pocket is.

Coming back to immigration, yes, the government can do a lot. The government can bring the respect of Canadian citizenship to its highest level by being fair, by respecting the principles of equality and by respecting the new immigrants, those who come to this country, to help them get into the system, to make them realize that this is their home, this is the future of their children.

The doctors, engineers and professionals are leaving this country because of high taxes, the boondoggles, the misuse of taxpayers' money, the killing of taxpayers through high taxes and the immigration policies which are not fair. All these factors are compounding the situation.

When they are debating about who their leader is or that their leader should go, I think this is not only the time for the Leader of the Liberal Party to go, it is time for the Liberals to go.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Maurice Dumas (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when we talk about the citizenship act, we also talk about immigration, and when we talk about immigration, we talk about racism. I am particularly happy to rise today, because yesterday was Anti-Racism Day.

• (1620)

Bill C-16 contains many provisions which are identical or very similar to the current ones. If I may, I will highlight some nuances and differences.

I will start with a provision in this part of the bill, which is quite interesting. Paragraph 2(2)(c) states that a person resides in Canada if the person is physically present in Canada and is not subject to a probation order, on parole or in jail.

More specifically on the issue of birth in Canada, the bill would maintain the current rule that children born in Canada are Canadian citizens, as stated in paragraph 4(1)(a). The only exceptions, as is the case now, concern children of foreign diplomats and their employees. That is paragraph 4(2).

With regard to derivative citizenship, any person born abroad of Canadian parents is automatically a Canadian citizen. This is often referred to as "citizenship by transmission". Second and subsequent generation children born abroad are also granted citizenship automatically, but they lose on attaining 28 years of age, unless they registered and have either resided in Canada for a period of at

Government Orders

least one year immediately before applying for citizenship or established a substantial connection with Canada.

The bill would restrict the automatic transmission of citizenship to second generation children born abroad and toughen the requirements for these second generation citizens who want to retain citizenship after the age of 28.

Clause 14 provides that, to retain citizenship after the age of 28, a person would have to apply to the minister and would have to have resided in Canada for at least 1,095 days during the six years before so applying. As we will see later on, physical presence in Canada would be required during a period of three years. This is the same residency requirement that would have to be met by all permanent residents seeking citizenship.

As for third and subsequent generations, they would not be able to acquire Canadian citizenship unless they meet the usual immigration and citizenship requirements, just like any other individual who chooses Canada as his or her country of adoption.

To avoid the risk of statelessness for third generation children born outside of Canada, clause 11 provides the granting of citizenship, on application, to a person who is less than 28 years of age and who has never acquired, or had the right to acquire, citizenship of any country, but has a birth parent who is a Canadian citizen.

To qualify, this person must have resided in Canada for at least three years during the six previous years, and must not have been convicted of an offence against national security. The nature of the offence is not stipulated, and this specific category of offence is not stipulated in either the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act or the Criminal Code.

Bill C-16 modifies the requirements for acquiring citizenship other than at birth. One of the major changes clarifies the residence requirements. This important change concerns the definition of residence as physical presence in Canada, under subparagraph 2(2)(c). The proposed objective requirement of residence, specifically to be physically present for three years, or 1,095 days, during the prescribed period, would do away with the huge uncertainties caused by the present legislation.

• (1625)

Even if the current legislation requires three years of residence, the word residence is not defined. Consequently, judicial decisions with radically opposed interpretations have greatly complicated enforcement of the law.

The year following the coming into force, in 1977, of the present legislation, the Federal Court held in a case that physical presence in Canada was not necessary to meet the requirements. The judge found that applicants had to demonstrate that they had established

a significant connection with Canada throughout the period, whether or not they had been physically present in Canada.

To demonstrate this connection, one might produce evidence of maintenance of residence, even though this was not absolutely necessary, of accounts in Canadian banks, investments, membership in clubs, provincial driving permits, and so on. In extreme cases, some applicants were granted citizenship even if they had actually been present in Canada only a few months, and even a few days.

However, other federal court judges strongly disagreed with this approach and refused to excuse prolonged absences. So an inconsistent jurisprudence evolved, which made the enforcement of the legislation unforeseeable and uncertain; some say it even compromised the residence requirement and therefore the value of the whole granting of Canadian citizenship process. In its 1994 report, the standing committee recommended that the legal definition of residence call for a substantial period of physical presence.

On the issue of language, Bill C-16 maintains the obligation to show an adequate knowledge of one of the official languages. Unfortunately, French is not the language chosen in most cases. Also, the applicants are still required to demonstrate an adequate knowledge of Canada and of the responsibilities and privileges of citizenship.

Some new provisions govern the granting of citizenship to children adopted by Canadian citizens abroad. The present legislation states that children adopted abroad must become permanent residents before granting them citizenship can even be considered, and there are loads of consequences to that.

First, children must undergo the same medical examination as any other person who applies for landed resident status or else have obtained a special exemption. Second, this means that children adopted by Canadian parents who live abroad and want to stay abroad cannot become landed residents and consequently Canadian citizens.

The legislation provides that minor children adopted abroad in accordance with the laws of the country of residence of the children or parents may be granted citizenship on application. The adoption must also meet the following criteria: the adoption must be in the best interest of the child; it must have created a genuine relationship of parent and child; and it must not have been intended to circumvent the requirements under any enactment for admission to Canada or citizenship.

Clause 10 of Bill C-16 is a new provision specifically enabling the Minister “for the purposes of this Act”—that is to grant citizenship—to deem a person who has resided in Canada for at least 10 years to be or have become a permanent resident. This clause is for persons who thought they were Canadian citizens while they were not.

Government Orders

As for renunciation and revocation, Bill C-16, as the existing legislation, sets out the circumstances where citizens may renounce their Canadian citizenship. The criteria are very similar.

• (1630)

Under clause 16, the renunciation of citizenship may be revoked, just like the citizenship itself and the restoration of citizenship could be, if the minister is satisfied that there has been false representations, fraud or concealment of material circumstances.

The procedure being used now to challenge the revocation order remains essentially unchanged. It is set out at clause 17. When a person is notified that the minister intends to revoke his or her citizenship, this person can request the minister to refer the matter to the federal court trial division. A new element is that the court will make its determination on a balance of probabilities, under clause 17(1)(b). This would solve the problem of certain decisions of the trial division as to the criteria that should apply.

To sum up, Bill C-16 would, with a few exceptions, maintain the present provisions on the revocation of citizenship. At present, people who lose their citizenship must first be admitted for permanent residence and may apply for citizenship after having resided in Canada for one year immediately before applying.

The bill requires people in this situation to have resided in Canada for at least 365 days during the two years immediately before applying for citizenship. This is provided under clause 19. Here again, the important change is that the new definition of residence would require actual presence in Canada.

Bill C-16 gives a new power to the Governor in Council, who, on the recommendation of the minister, may deny citizenship if "there are reasonable grounds to believe that it is not in the public interest for a person to become a citizen". Not only is this power new, it would also constitute a substantive change to the current legislation according to which citizenship is a right and not a privilege, provided that certain objective criteria are met.

While there is no definition of public interest, the new clause would, for example, make it possible not to grant citizenship to a person who distributes hate literature but who otherwise meets the criteria.

Bill C-16 would maintain, with some changes, existing procedures relating to the denial of citizenship for reasons of national security. As it is the case now, the process would begin with a report by the minister to the Security Intelligence Review Committee saying that there are reasonable grounds to believe that the person has engaged or will engage in an activity that constitutes a threat to the security of Canada or an activity that is part of a pattern of criminal activity.

The bill states that, within ten days after the report is made, the person who is the subject of a report shall be notified that the report has been made and made aware of possible consequences. The committee would then investigate using the procedure set out in the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act and, as soon as practicable, send to the person who is the subject of the report a statement summarizing the information available to the review committee.

A new provision would have the review committee consider whether the information may be disclosed without injury to national security or to the safety of persons. That is covered in paragraph 25(3). On completion of its investigation, the review committee would report to the Governor in Council and provide the report's conclusions to the person who is the subject of the report, but not necessarily at the same time.

So, Bill C-16 adds somewhat to the list of things preventing an individual from obtaining Canadian citizenship.

• (1635)

Crimes committed in foreign countries would be taken into account as well as those committed in Canada.

The bill prohibits granting citizenship to any person who is under a removal order or subject to an inquiry under the Immigration Act that may lead to removal from Canada or the loss of permanent resident status.

The bill also brings important changes in the way citizenship applications are processed. Citizenship judges, who are working under the direction of a chief judge, would be replaced and their basic duties fulfilled by officials acting under the delegated authority of the minister. This is under section 44.

Ceremonial duties would be assigned to citizenship commissioners, appointed by the governor in council to serve full-time or part-time, during pleasure, for a term of not more than five years. That is under section 31 of the bill. Each commissioner would receive a remuneration. A chief commissioner could be appointed to supervise and co-ordinate the work of the commissioners.

I would like to focus on the role of the commissioners. According to the bill:

31(6) To be eligible for appointment as, and to serve as, a Citizenship Commissioner, a person must be a citizen, have demonstrated an understanding of the values of good citizenship and be recognized for their valuable civic contribution.

The duties of a citizenship commissioner would be the following: to preside at citizenship ceremonies; to promote active citizenship in the community; to provide, on the minister's request, advise and recommendation about citizenship, the exercise of the minis-

ter's discretion, appropriate methods to evaluate citizenship applicants knowledge of Canada, the responsibilities and rights of citizenship and official languages. It is therefore of the utmost importance that commissioners be chosen very carefully.

In conclusion, I would like to speak briefly about the citizenship oath. Personally, and I am not speaking for my party, there is something I do not like in this oath. It is an allegiance oath, and I quote:

—to Her Majesty Elizabeth II, Queen of Canada, and to her heirs and successors.

I was raised as a Republican. Not an American style Republican, but an anti-monarchist nonetheless. I do not agree with the fact that Canada, an independent country, still has a foreigner as its head of state. This is why I dislike the oath as it is written.

When I had to take the oath as a member of parliament, I tried to skip certain parts, because I do not believe that we in Canada should swear allegiance to the Queen of England. I would agree if Canada had a leader from this country as its head of state. The governor general could bear the title of president, something with which I would agree more.

[*English*]

Mr. Dennis Gruending (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today to Bill C-16, the citizenship act. I will be sharing my time with the member for Halifax West.

I am a relatively new member of parliament. I was elected in a byelection last November. I am especially pleased to get up and, for the first time, talk about a subject that is near and dear to my heart.

I have very strong feelings about immigrants and refugees. Like many people in the House, my grandparents were immigrants to this country; on the one side from Germany and on the other from the Ukraine. My family members were farmers and settlers. As I was growing up, we did have a multicultural society for the time, a patchwork quilt in Saskatchewan of a variety of people, mostly from central Europe, in addition to the aboriginal people of course who had lived here for thousands of years.

My wife's family were Mennonite farmers who similarly had a long and interesting history of moving from place to place and always making great contributions in whatever place they lived.

• (1640)

One of the strongest experiences I have had with immigrant and refugee people was during the 1973 disaster in Chile when people had to leave their country. Interestingly, many of them at that time

Government Orders

were branded as criminals by a regime that was actually criminal. I will have more to say about criminality and immigrants and refugees in a moment. It was clear and remains clear what a great contribution the Chilean community made to Canada. I am very pleased to say, in a personal sense, that some of these Chileans, who I met in the mid-seventies, remain my closest and dearest friends.

In 1979, 1980 and 1981 I worked with the Catholic Archdiocese of Regina. One of the very busy but pleasant jobs that we had was to welcome the Vietnamese boat people who were adrift in the South China Sea and ended up, in some cases, in our country. We co-operated with the immigration department in setting up umbrella agreements so that communities could accept these people.

I also want to mention that perhaps 10 to 15 years after these people came here destitute, and, in some cases, not even the clothes on their backs when they got off the ships, a significant academic study was completed showing that the Vietnamese refugees in Canada had made a very significant economic and social contribution to our country.

Both my wife and I have been involved in refugee work from almost the beginning of our marriage, which goes back many years. We have, in successive times and places, welcomed Central Americans, Iraqis, Iranians, eastern Europeans, Somalis, Eritreans, Bosnians, Africans, particularly from Sudan, and the most recent family we have worked with is an Afghani family who had spent years in refugee camps in Pakistan.

I do believe I have some knowledge on which to speak, although not as much as my wife, but I can tell the House that it is often very worthwhile and interesting to work with people before making pronouncements about what one fears may be their negative contribution to our country. That has been far from our experience.

In a more philosophical vein, I did spend a number of years working for the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops who often had things to say about immigration policy and the whole question of immigrants and refugees. I will only mention one point and it is of a theological nature.

I learned, from things that the bishop said about the biblical code of people in countries at the time of Christ and before, how to welcome a stranger. When the stranger came, they opened their tent; they killed the fatted calf; they literally rolled out the carpet. One of the statements the bishops issued while I was working with them on the immigration policy was called "Welcome the Stranger".

Before I get into more specifics of the bill, I want to mention my political experience, brief as it may be. During the byelection in November 1999, I was pleasantly surprised by the number of

Government Orders

immigrant peoples in the riding of Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, particularly on the west side of Saskatoon where I was doing my door knocking. When I knocked on the doors of Filipino people, Vietnamese people and people from other countries, I was often welcomed in a way that I was sometimes not at other doors. These people were extremely pleased to be taking some part in the democratic process. I remember various episodes where people told me that it was not only their duty but their pleasure to vote and become involved.

I can remember a Filipino man in particular. When I went to his house in the dark one evening, he invited me in and asked if I was alone. When I said that I was alone, he said “Well, what a wonderful country when you can campaign politically without having to take your bodyguards along with you”. That was the experience that he was bringing to this and that was his view of our country and now his country.

I will summarize by saying that I have great respect, admiration and compassion for immigrant and refugee peoples. This arises out of my family background, my life experiences and my philosophical orientation.

• (1645)

I know that often there is a backlash toward immigrants and refugees. For all the reasons I have mentioned, I certainly do not share that. I try at every opportunity to talk to people about it.

I want to say as well, as my colleague from Winnipeg Centre said earlier today, that there is an element of self-interest in our welcoming immigrant and refugee people. He talked about how Canada should think about and decide how many people it wants and what sort of population it wants, and cast its policies in that way. If we look at our past, and he mentioned the time of Sifton when the great west was settled, there was a great openness for people from other countries because we knew that we needed them. I would say that we still need them today and will continue to need them in the future.

If we have any doubt of that, there was an interesting story in the newspaper within the past week about Japan and Korea and how they will have to have fairly massive immigration. Otherwise they will see a loss in population and a shortage of workers, and I would say a shortage of prosperity. That is something which Canada has to look at as well.

This does not mean that it should be completely open ended. We have to have due process. We have to ensure that we do not have queue jumping. We have to do checks to ensure that we are not accepting people with a criminal past into our country.

If I may, I would like to make several specific references to the bill. I have talked about due process. A good number of groups appeared, on a previous incarnation of this bill, to talk about things they thought important, and they made some very good points. I will refer to a few of them.

There is a possibility, the way the legislation is structured, of giving the minister new powers to annul citizenship and broadening measures to revoke it. This means that citizens born outside Canada could lose citizenship, even after many years here, without due process, and in some cases without the right to a hearing.

There are lengthened residency requirements for citizenship. We are concerned about some of these.

There are increased language requirements, imposing more rigorous requirements on applicants for citizenship. This would penalize people who have difficulty learning a new language, and elderly people, often women, survivors of torture.

I could tell the House of the experiences I have had since being elected of immigrants who have come to me who have had great problems one way or another with the language, which creates great problems with the immigration officials.

There will be a certain loss of discretion in citizenship making. Citizenship judges will no longer be the people who make decisions. Frequently it will be civil servants working within specific guidelines. This concerns our caucus as well. We believe that cabinet powers to refuse citizenship are too broad.

We are concerned that business people may find the requirement to live in Canada for three of six years such a difficulty that many may not immigrate to Canada and may take their business elsewhere as a result.

In summary, I and my colleagues in the New Democratic Party feel that it is time this bill be brought to bear and that we have new regulations for immigration, but at the same time we have certain concerns with the bill, some of which I have outlined very briefly and others which my colleague from Winnipeg Centre talked about in more detail earlier today.

We would hope to see in committee some changes which would improve this bill and make it more possible for us, perhaps, to support it.

Mr. Gordon Earle (Halifax West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to have the opportunity to rise today to speak, along with my colleagues from Winnipeg Centre and Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, to this very important topic of citizenship.

It has been mentioned that citizenship is something which all Canadians hold very dear to their hearts.

A number of problems come through my constituency office around immigration issues and the difficulties people have in

Government Orders

coming to Canada. Quite often there are a lot of bureaucratic entanglements before they can get here.

I think of one situation in particular of a young man who had married a young lady from his home of Lebanon. He had been separated from his bride for almost a year and was still encountering difficulties in bringing her to Canada. I was able to get involved in that case and help move it along to the point where she eventually was admitted to Canada.

• (1650)

Shortly after that, he and his wife and their family invited me and my wife to a party they were having to celebrate this occasion. It was a wonderful experience to be in the midst of the party with so many relatives, young children and older people, all having a wonderful time. They were enjoying the hospitality and friendship of each other. My wife and I looked at each other and thought it was a shame that people have to go through such difficulty before they can come together to enjoy each other.

That is why it is important that the whole issue of immigration and citizenship be looked upon very seriously and dealt with in a way that will show respect for our fellow human beings and enable us to enjoy each other's company.

With respect to the bill, some of our concerns have already been mentioned. I want to touch upon a couple of issues concerning citizenship which I think are very important.

Clause 21 of Bill C-16 would introduce a new power to permit the governor in council, upon a report from the minister, to deny a person's citizenship "where there are reasonable grounds to believe that it is not in the public interest for the person to become a citizen".

We have some concerns about that. That power would not only be new, it would also represent somewhat of a conceptual change from the present law. Under the present law citizenship is seen pretty much as a right more so than a privilege. It is a right which all people should have, provided that the objective criteria have been fulfilled. The new provision would put the whole question of citizenship into the area of a privilege which would be conferred upon people. The question of the definition of public interest is not really clarified in the legislation. We do not know what is meant by public interest and what will be used to deny citizenship to an individual.

In order to trigger this section of the bill the minister would be required to provide the person concerned with a summary of the contents of the proposed report to the governor in council. The person would then have 30 days in which to respond, in writing, to the minister. If the minister proceeded with the report and the governor in council agreed, the latter would order citizenship to be denied.

The decision of cabinet—and this is the part we want to look at very carefully—would not be subject to appeal or review by any court and would be valid for five years. This order would be conclusive proof of the matters that were stated in the report.

We have a situation where cabinet could decide, for various reasons which are not clearly amplified in the bill, that in the public interest someone is not fit to be granted Canadian citizenship and there would be no appeal. That gives a very big power to refuse citizenship on the basis of a public interest which could be defined in any way, shape or form. We have a lot of concern about that.

We are also concerned about the citizenship commissioners. The new bill would introduce a major change in the way citizenship applications are dealt with. Many citizenship judges are doing an excellent job and I commend them for their dedication to their task.

I have had the opportunity to attend in my riding many of the citizenship courts and to witness firsthand the excellent job which these citizenship judges do in imparting to the new citizens the joy, responsibilities and obligations involved in being a Canadian citizen. I want to commend the many citizenship judges throughout our country for the fine work they do.

• (1655)

Under Bill C-16 we find that these judges would be replaced by citizenship commissioners. Their duties would be full time or part time and they would be appointed by the governor in council during pleasure. Again, the words "during pleasure" cause us a bit of concern. That is something which should be looked at very closely. We really should not make change for the sake of making change if there is no rationale behind changing the citizenship judges and the fine job they do to a new system. I am not sure we would be moving forward in a very positive way.

It is also not clear how the advisory side of the commissioner's mandate would be accomplished under the bill, nor why the commissioners would be particularly well suited to provide such advice. Again, this is something that causes us concern and we feel it should be looked at very closely.

There are a number of things upon which I could elaborate, but I would conclude by emphasizing that from my experience the whole process of a person coming to our country, having the right to citizenship and going through the process which moves them into that status is very, very important.

I have seen many new citizens who exude a sense of pride and a sense of happiness when they are declared Canadian citizens. I have been at the ceremonies where tears fall from the eyes of many of these people as they are welcomed into Canadian society. As we do that, we are certainly saying something about our society, about the openness of our society, about how we feel that people have an obligation to share one with the other and about how we have an

Government Orders

obligation to support these people. That is an aspect I would want to emphasize as well.

When we look at citizenship we cannot just dwell on the responsibility of those who are receiving citizenship, we must dwell upon our own responsibility to provide the kind of support mechanisms that are necessary to new Canadians.

When I come to Ottawa and I get in a taxi to drive to the House of Commons, many times I am being chauffeured by someone who is a new Canadian, someone from another country. When they tell me about their background, their experience and their qualifications in their home country, I ask myself why they are driving a taxi. Why are they not working as an engineer, a lawyer or a doctor? We have to look at that aspect of citizenship as well, as to how we treat our new citizens.

The other day I had a young man, who was originally from Africa, talk to me about the difficulty he is having getting a job in Nova Scotia. As we talked it became very clear that this young man had a university degree from one of our own institutions, yet he was having difficulty getting a job.

We have to look at some of the barriers that we place in the way of our new citizens who have obtained the desired status of Canadian citizenship.

We all have an obligation and a responsibility to work on this matter in the best interests of each and every one of the new citizens and to do the best we can to make them truly welcome and truly proud to be Canadian citizens.

Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, there were a couple of incidents in my riding concerning immigration which the hon. member might wish to comment on.

The first incident happened in the last two weeks. A medical doctor was returning to Canada. He was not yet a citizen. The immigration department, for some reason, was unable to quickly process his entry visa to allow him to continue working. He had been working in Canada for three years. As a result, the town went for over a week without the services of that doctor. It finally took the intervention of outside sources, including MPs like myself, to move it along.

I would like to know if the hon. member has a comment with respect to how the system is working when it comes to work visas.

The second thing is that in our riding we have quite a few dairy farms. It is difficult to find people who will work all day, from 5.30 in the morning, or who will work a broken shift. I know of one big dairy farm which requires labourers. The owner happens to know

of people in Switzerland, persons experienced in dairy, who would come to Manitoba to work.

● (1700)

They are having many problems within the immigration department to get him moved along to allow him to immigrate and work. There does not seem to be anybody in our area to fill that particular job. Does the member have any comments with regard to how the immigration system is working?

Mr. Gordon Earle: Mr. Speaker, I have found as well that there have been many bureaucratic problems with respect to assisting people to come to Canada. The example the member spoke of with the doctor is one example. I could cite many others as well. Part of the problem seems to be that we have a bit of a separation between the Canadian authorities and the visa officers in the country of origin. Far too often it is almost like never the two shall meet.

We allow a certain amount of independence to the party in the country of origin to make his or her decision and sometimes the accountability aspect of why the decision is made and how it is made is not always there. It is like “We have no control over that decision, that is made by this person here”. If that person gets up on a bad day and does not like the look of the person who is applying for the visa or whatever, the applicant may never get here. Those are issues that we have to work on.

With respect to getting people here to work in various jobs, as the member mentioned with regard to the farm industry, we have to be mindful of the cultural differences as well because it may be that a person coming from another country needs a cultural adjustment before working in a given type of operation. As I mentioned, quite often people coming from another country will have training for a certain profession and ideally it would be nice if work could be obtained in that profession. Those are areas we have to work on.

Mr. Andrew Telegdi (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me commend my colleagues from Halifax West and Saskatoon—Rose-town—Biggar. They both made very eloquent presentations on the issue of what it means to be a Canadian citizen.

I believe my friend from Halifax West identified a very important point when he talked about people not being recognized for the qualifications they have. In my community, the Waterloo region, we have a doctor shortage, yet we have enough doctors who were foreign trained who are not allowed to practice. One of the problems is that licensing of physicians is a provincial responsibility. As much as we talk about the brain drain in this country, we also very much have what is known as the brain waste in this country. It is very unfortunate. I agree, I have shared many of the same experiences. In Canada we probably have the most highly

Government Orders

educated taxi drivers of any place in the world because of the barriers that are put in place for people trying to gain recognition for their training.

I ask the hon. member to maybe further expand on his experience and give us his suggestions for what we must do, recognizing for the most part this is under provincial jurisdiction. I ask the hon. member to try to address this very tragic situation for the people involved.

Mr. Gordon Earle: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to address that issue because it is a very real issue right across the country.

What we have to do is not what was recommended by a statement read earlier in the House by a member of the official opposition who was decrying affirmative action programs and saying that we ought not to have those kinds of programs. We do need programs that will facilitate people being able to fulfil their potential in a meaningful way and that sometimes means giving people a leg up, removing the barriers and enabling people to move into the system.

As long as we have a preconceived idea that being equal and having equal opportunity means everybody has to be treated the same, then we will never have people fulfilling their potential. The situation is such that people do have to be treated differently because of different backgrounds, different experiences and different situations where they have not had equal opportunity for advancement. We have to change our mindset if we want to see this happen and that comes from within for each individual.

As long as people in positions of power, people in positions of authority do not have that change of mindset then we will never, ever see the kind of thing happen that the member has indicated should happen, and which I would agree should happen, so that we would use the brain power that we have here. Canada is a beautiful country. There are all kinds of opportunities and all kinds of people to fulfil those opportunities.

• (1705)

Mr. Jim Hart (Okanagan—Coquihalla, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform the House that I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Calgary Northeast.

I am here to tell the House today that I am a proud Canadian, just like many other members of the House of Commons. I am a proud Canadian because I have had the experience of being able to travel throughout the world as early as when I was 17 years old and joined the Canadian Armed Forces. I was able to travel around the world and the Canadian flag was held with deep respect everywhere I travelled.

Just a few years ago I was fortunate enough to travel on the 50th anniversary of the end of the second world war to Holland. That

was the most exciting time of my life, seeing the Canadian flags up and down the streets of Holland in commemoration of Canada's liberation of Holland in the second world war. It was very moving. It was an experience that I do not think I will ever forget. As I said, I am a very proud Canadian.

It is important in this debate today to realize that Canada's most valuable asset is not our natural resources or many of the other things people would think. It is actually the people of Canada. It is the people who make this country what it is. It is a democracy and we should be very proud of that fact.

I rise on behalf of the people of Okanagan—Coquihalla to speak on Bill C-16, an act respecting Canadian citizenship. The purpose of Bill C-16 is to repeal and replace the current Citizenship Act which many Canadians know is severely flawed. While this is an important goal, I have two serious reservations with this proposed legislation. First, specific clauses in the bill need to be amended before Bill C-16 will function as intended. Second, the timing of this bill is all wrong. Changes to the Immigration Act need to be dealt with before this bill is passed and no bill dealing with immigration has been tabled in the House.

The Liberal government claims that Bill C-16 is the first major reform with respect to citizenship in 20 years. The intent of this bill is to provide more clearly defined guidelines, replace current procedures with a new administrative structure and increase the minister's power to deny citizenship. Unfortunately what the Liberals intend and what the Liberals actually do are two separate things. Bill C-16 is no exception. While the Liberals claim that Bill C-16 is a major modern reform of the Citizenship Act, those of us who look closely at the bill see a number of areas that have been totally neglected and others that have been actually impacted in a negative manner.

In 1994 the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration made a number of important recommendations with respect to citizenship which the government has totally ignored. Given that the government has had five years to develop this bill, it is inexcusable that it is full of serious omissions.

Like most Canadians, I attach a great deal of importance to my citizenship as a Canadian. Therefore, I would like to focus my comments on the conditions for granting citizenship.

The current legislation governing citizenship is lax in this regard. Currently individuals who are deemed to be permanent residents of Canada have been found to have nothing more than a bank account or property in Canada. It seems as though having a physical presence is not important. Canadians believe it is. Bill C-16 takes a half measure to deal with this issue. It correctly defines a permanent resident as an individual who must have a physical presence here in Canada for at least 1,095 days during a six year period preceding their application for citizenship.

Government Orders

While this makes good sense, Bill C-16 does not provide any mechanism for determining when applicants arrive in Canada or when they leave, nor does the Liberal government intend to develop one. This was a serious concern for the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration and the committee members recommended that measures be introduced to monitor periods of time permanent residents are out of the country. Without a viable means of determining time spent in Canada, requiring that a permanent resident spend 1,095 days in Canada is as meaningless as a judge sentencing a convicted murderer to life in prison. We all know the time will not be served.

• (1710)

There are a number of other problems with this bill. The bill specifies that an applicant must have an adequate knowledge of one of the official languages in Canada but no specific provisions are made for how this is to be judged or by whom.

Another serious problem is that the number one recommendation of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration was that the declaration of Canadian citizenship express the vision Canadians share for their future and the importance they attach to their citizenship. This should have been an opportunity for all Canadians to express what they wanted to see in the Canadian citizenship oath. It would have been a great opportunity for a nation-wide patriotic debate. Instead, the minister hobbled together an oath on her own. We can almost picture the minister huddled together with her staff just before a question period briefing and trying to put together a citizenship oath.

Of course with all things Liberal, there is an issue of patronage. Despite the importance Canadians place on their citizenship the Liberals have maintained the tradition, Mr. Speaker, of patronage appointees. I know the Speaker is shocked by that.

Citizenship judges have been renamed citizenship commissioners in the proposed legislation but most of their duties will be taken over by departmental officials. It is just one more plum post for friends of the Prime Minister.

This legislation also discriminates against refugees. Current refugees get to count each full day of residency in Canada from the date of application as a half day toward the total needed for their citizenship application, but Bill C-16 removes this provision, penalizing applicants for all the bureaucratic delays that are already in the system. This is blatantly unfair for true refugees.

The real problem with Bill C-16 though is that the Liberals have their priorities all wrong. Last year the people of British Columbia watched as boatload after boatload of illegal immigrants entered this country with no action from the government at all. Our immigration system is in a desperate situation, pandering to people

traffickers and others who abuse our immigration system and our compassion.

Canadians want to know why the Liberals have made citizenship a priority when the immigration system is in such dire straits. It is like putting new windows on a house when the roof is collapsing. It appears as though the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration has no intention of fixing the multitude of problems facing Canada's immigration system.

In an advanced copy of her new immigration and refugee protection act, not yet tabled in the House, it is apparent that the Liberals will not close the door to bogus asylum seekers and people traffickers. Instead the Liberals are throwing the door wide open.

The definition of refugee is slated to be expanded and entrenched in the law with an entirely new category called "people in need of protection". This definition goes well beyond that required by the United Nations' definition. The new immigration and refugee protection act does outline increased fines and penalties for the crime of people smuggling but these mean nothing without credible sentencing. Sentencing in Canada is anything but credible.

Recent statistics from the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics indicate that between 1995 and 1998 only 14 charges have ever been made under section 94.1 of the Immigration Act. Section 94.1 states:

—every person who knowingly organizes, includes, aids or abets... the coming into Canada of a person without valid documents required by the law is guilty of an offence and liable:

on conviction to a fine not over \$100,000 or to imprisonment for not more than five years, or both

and

on summary conviction, to a fine not over \$10,000 or to imprisonment of not more than one year.

During the last five years nobody charged under section 94.1 of the Immigration Act for people smuggling has served one day in jail. According to the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, the toughest penalty handed down for an individual convicted was a \$4,000 fine and one year probation. No wonder our immigration system is the laughing stock of the world.

• (1715)

Canada needs to be recruiting the world's best and brightest while allowing legitimate refugees to enter Canada and acquire citizenship in a timely and fair manner. While the citizenship act is in need of review, our immigration system is in dire straits and needs immediate attention. The government must focus its attention on priority areas like immigration. Let us get our immigration system up and running effectively. Then we can deal with citizenship.

Government Orders

Mr. Philip Mayfield (Cariboo—Chilcotin, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I compliment my colleague and friend on his speech. I agree entirely that Canada should be seeking the best and the brightest and opening its doors to those refugees genuinely in need.

On that particular point I found this debate and some of the questions coming out of it rather frustrating and disappointing. We talked about the needs of Canadians. Canadian communities, such as many of those in my own constituency, have a need for doctors to replace those who have left because of the disastrous effects of the government's intervention in the medicare system. Replacing them with doctors who are qualified and willing to come is difficult because of the bureaucratic logjam in Immigration Canada and its unwillingness to do anything to move the process along at anything more than the slowest speed possible.

I have also listened to people talk about justifying the admission of illegal refugees on the basis that Canada does not have enough offices to process them overseas. I find that ridiculous. Legislation should once in a while be geared to the needs of Canadians.

Does my colleague have any comments on how this legislation might focus on the economic and social needs of Canadians and not simply pander to the needs, legitimate and otherwise, of those who are not Canadians and who only wish that they were?

Mr. Jim Hart: Mr. Speaker, Canadians in general as I said earlier, do believe that Canada's most valuable asset is its people. It is a legitimate requirement that Canada in its desire to grow and become the most competitive nation in the world seek out the brightest and best qualified people to come to Canada.

Having said that, there is a legitimate need to recognize that some people do come to Canada as legitimate refugees. The UN has a declaration on refugee status and it is very explicit. This bill has gone one step further in stating that Canada would also take in people who, I guess by some declaration, say that they are people in need.

As I have been able to travel around the world, there are many people in other countries who would love to live in Canada and have the opportunities that we have here. The fact is that those people are citizens of other countries and they cannot simply come to Canada just to improve their own economic status. There is a responsibility that goes along with being a Canadian citizen and Canadians understand that. The legislation should focus on dealing with the responsibility of being a Canadian, what it means and include in it the aspirations that people want to have down the road.

The first thing that should be done is we should deal with the immigration system itself. We should address the problems that we saw last year in British Columbia. We should deal with the

boatloads of people who are not legitimate refugees. They just said, "Canada sounds like a nice place to go to, let us go to Canada". They paid an exorbitant amount of money to come here. It was through illegal means that they arrived in Canada. Those people are still being held up by the process that this country has developed.

• (1720)

We have to deal with that. We have to deal with people smuggling. We have to deal with the real problems that Canadians are concerned about. We have to improve the immigration system.

Every single member in the House, no matter what political viewpoint, are all proud Canadians. We have a responsibility to the people of Canada to deal with the problems facing Canadians. Immigration is a disaster and everyone in the House knows it. That is what we should be focusing on.

Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, yes, the long suffering Immigration Act and Citizenship Act. Even though Bill C-16 is designated as the Citizenship Act and amendments to it, it reflects quite frequently on the Immigration Act itself. If we are intending on fixing the Citizenship Act, the matter that precedes it is the Immigration Act and all of its faults.

When Reform first came to the House in 1994, immigration was on the plate. It was an issue that was debated at length by the Reform Party. We dared to bring up this topic. We dared to introduce some different ideas in spite of all the criticism that was hurled our way. Much of that criticism was an attempt not only by the government side but by special interests in the community that had a direct ear to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration at that time and still do—

Mr. Philip Mayfield: Immigration lawyers and consultants.

Mr. Art Hanger: Yes, the lawyers and consultants had a vested interest in keeping the situation the way it was. It was a moneymaker for so many. Unfortunately things have not improved all that much. The consultants still exist and are making piles of money from it. The lawyers are still making piles of money from it. For what and to whose advantage? Is it for the advantage of the Canadian people? No, it has never been to their advantage.

The people in this country have never had input into any discussion on the Immigration Act. They have never had any input into any provision or amendment. Why? Because there has been a vested interest on the part of the Liberal government since 1993, the time that we have been in the House, to lean toward those who have that very special consideration: the consultants, the lawyers and anyone else who is part of that industry.

Government Orders

Things have not changed. The amendments in Bill C-16 do not deal with that problem. The changes that are coming up in the new Immigration Act do not deal with the problem of interference.

When I took office as a member of parliament in 1993 I was somewhat shocked to find that 70% to 80% of my work related to immigration matters. Immigration has become a political football. If we oppose it, we are criticized severely and called every name in the book. If we say there is something wrong with the act, our opponents say we are criticizing immigrants or that we are being discriminatory. That is the accusation made. Unfortunately that is a smokescreen. It is an abuse of a position to hurl those kinds of insults at someone who is just trying to straighten out a problem that most people in the country know exists but are not quite sure how it all comes together.

When dealing with issues on immigration, the quickest way to come up with an act that is suitable for people is to include them. New immigrants, those who have been here for 20 years and those who were born here should be included. The government would be very surprised in what it found out.

• (1725)

One of the biggest complaints about the Immigration Act, even relating to the Citizenship Act and certainly dealing with the refugee system, is that many immigrants who do come here would like to bring their relatives over to visit from time to time. That is a fair request. They would like to bring their relatives over but time and time again they have been denied that privilege.

Why would they be denied bringing their relatives to visit them here in Canada? It is because of an interpretation in one court case by a supreme court justice which has never been challenged. If a person comes here and claims refugee status, no one can send him back. That is a fact. No one can send him back. Even though he may have come on a visitors visa and decided to stay, he cannot be turned back or refused if he says, "I am a refugee".

Unfortunately that very specific court ruling has never been challenged. It is high time that it was because the immigrants in my riding, and I have many, would like their friends and relatives to visit them even if it is in the case of sickness. But because of that very foolish interpretation many of them are denied that very special privilege.

When talking about a family, that is a provision that could change to allow a stronger family and certainly a much better position on strengthening the family.

What else is wrong which this act does not address? We could cross-reference this act to the Immigration Act because they go hand in glove.

It is high time that we changed the visitors visas and introduced a system where cash bonds could be placed. Anyone who refused to return would have to forfeit the bond. It would pay for any court case that came along. This would address a major concern in my riding at least and would make a lot of people much more comfortable.

I am going to go back to the refugee system. I think it is the most flawed area in immigration. There are so many queue jumpers who use the refugee system to enter this country. The issue is not being addressed in a very effective way.

This was a battle in 1993, in 1994, and in fact it has even existed much longer than that. It was one that we took up when we came into office in 1994. We fought diligently to have some reasonable changes made to the Immigration Act to deal with the refugee determination system.

Lo and behold very little has changed. Bill C-16 talks about patronage appointments through the citizenship process. That permeates the whole immigration system. Not only does it deal with the citizenship process, the judges and those doing the evaluations, but it also deals with the Immigration and Refugee Board. Nothing has changed. I believe it has even gotten worse and has been pushed down out of sight because no one wants to talk about it much any more. Needless to say, when we do not talk about it on this side, the government refuses to clean up any of the problems that exist.

Let us look at the immigration and refugee act. If that hole is plugged, I believe that a lot of immigrants who are in the process of trying to immigrate to this country through the normal legal channels will feel a lot better about the process. They look at others who have jumped the queue, who have come in through the back door via the refugee system. They become very irritated and as a result they too begin to look for other ways of entering the country.

• (1730)

I will now talk about the issue of sovereignty. We on the west coast of this country have experienced boatloads of people arriving on our shores. These people are not refugees but illegals who have come in through this whole process of smuggling people, which has severely tarnished the immigration process in Canada.

People smugglers have not been dealt with in a severe manner in any way, shape or form. They should be taught that this is not acceptable. Unfortunately, the government of the day refuses to tighten up the laws in this area. Enforcement and court action are the keys to this problem. I can only call on the government to examine those processes before it deals in any substantive way with the citizenship issue.

Mr. Bob Kilger: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

In the spirit of co-operation, I have consulted with members of all parties and wonder if there might be unanimous consent, if you were to seek it, Mr. Speaker, that we would extend, by no more than five minutes, to complete the question and comment period for the member for Calgary Northeast. It is my understanding that we would then put the question and the matter would be deferred.

The Deputy Speaker: Is there agreement to proceed for another five minutes, at the end of which we will put the question on the bill?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member for Calgary Northeast as he was talking about the Chinese migrant boat people. I also dealt with that in my remarks. As a member of the citizenship and immigration committee, we certainly heard about it over and over again, mostly from the members of the Reform Party.

It is true that when the first boatload of people landed on the shores of the west coast, the Reform Party members had a press conference demanding that the boat be turned around and sent back in its present state. They did not even want to give them a new boat. They just wanted to send them back where they came from, obviously not recognizing the 1985 supreme court ruling that once people have laid their feet on this soil they do have a right to a hearing.

Obviously the Reform Party members wanted to be judge and jury both. They wanted to take one look at these people and claim they were not refugees because they did not deem them to be refugees as they did not look like us and send them back to where they came from without even a hearing. This is absolutely absurd because everybody has a right to due process and a hearing, and that is exactly what is going on right now.

I do not expect the member for Calgary Northeast, who has not sat on that committee for a long time, to be fully up to speed on what people are doing to deal with this issue. However, for the member for Calgary Northeast to say that nothing is being done about people smuggling and nothing is being done to deal with the backlog of these desperate migrants who have washed up on the west coast, is absolute baloney.

These people have been locked up and are awaiting hearings. They are being dealt with one by one. In the hearings so far it has been found that most of them do not fit the category of refugee and they are being sent back to where they came from, to the Fujian province. Five or six have been found to be genuine refugees and they are being welcomed into our country.

For the hon. member to stand up and help fan the flames of hatred in this country with misinformation like that is inexcusable.

Government Orders

I personally will not sit here and listen to it. I hear it too much on the immigration committee as it is. These members are the architects of the misinformation that is actually turning into an anti-immigration movement in this country built around 500 or 600 desperate people who are seeking a better life on our shores.

I notice there is an organization now called the Canada First Immigration Reform Committee. I am just wondering if there is any connection with the Reform Party because these hate-mongers are saying exactly the same thing as this political party, and there is also the commonality with the names. I am just wondering if they are not more constitutionally connected or associated.

That will be my question. Is there a direct connection between the Reform Party and the Canada First Immigration Reform Committee, which is the purveyor of hate in this country when it comes to anti-immigration?

Mr. Art Hanger: Mr. Speaker, I do not know of any specific comment that I made during my presentation that involved hate.

• (1735)

I and members of my party do not belong to any organization, nor do we have any ties to any other organization that espouses hate. I am surprised at the member's comments. I feel ashamed for him as a member of parliament trying to impugn that kind of response to this party. None has been placed on his party over any other issue such as this. I do not think it deserves the dignity of an answer when he puts it in that form.

I will put it in a way that all in the House will recognize. The Reform Party wants to see a good, honest, fair immigration process. That is what we are asking for. We have never said anything about not having a good, honest, fair immigration process or a refugee process. We want to see refugees come from those areas in the world where they are truly refugees as defined by the U.N., not gate-crashers.

If that is what this member from the NDP party is trying to portray, I say "absolutely not". We have set ourselves apart. Sure, we have dared to talk about the immigration policy in this country because it needed to be talked about. It should involve the people in this country and not just fan the flames of anger. There is a party that just did.

The Deputy Speaker: The time for questions and comments has now expired. I understand the disposition of the House is to proceed with the question on this bill. Is the House ready for the question.

Some hon. members: Question.

Private Members' Business

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I have received notice from the hon. member for Wentworth—Burlington that he is unable to move his motion during private members' hour on Friday, March 24.

It has not been possible to arrange an exchange of positions in the order of precedence. Accordingly, I am directing the table officers to drop that item of business to the bottom of the order of precedence.

Private members' hour will thus be cancelled and the House will continue with the business before it prior to private members' hour.

It being 5.38 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's order paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*Translation*]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

The House resumed from December 15, 1999, consideration of the motion, and of the amendment.

The Deputy Speaker: The last time the motion was debated an amendment to the amendment was moved by the member for Kamouraska—Rivière-du-loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques. The Deputy Speaker had reservations about whether it was in order and took the matter under advisement.

Since then, the Chair was able to look into the matter and is now ready to make a ruling on the amendment to the amendment. First, I wish to remind the members of the House of the wording of the amendment to the amendment.

That the following words be added at the end of the motion:

"and the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development review the situation of these workers at its next sitting."

Amendments to amendments must flow strictly from the amendment and try to amend it, they must not flow from the original question. They cannot go beyond the amendment, introduce new issues having nothing to do with it, or differ substantially from the amendment.

Since this amendment to the amendment does not meet these criteria, I declare that it is out of order.

• (1740)

[*English*]

Mrs. Michelle Dockrill (Bras d'Or—Cape Breton, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to speak to the amendment to the motion proposed by my colleague from Acadie—Bathurst with respect to workers in seasonal industries.

The nature of this amendment, which seeks to substitute the immediate action component of Motion No. 222, helps all of us understand exactly what the government is trying to do. It is trying to delay further and this delay is dangerous. This amendment to review employment insurance benefits for seasonal workers is yet another cheap stalling tactic by the Liberal government.

The motion proposes immediate action. We have been asking for that for a very long time as have seasonal workers. Even the delegates to the Liberal convention know it is right. They introduced a resolution calling on the government to remove intensity provisions which claw back benefits for seasonal workers who repeatedly draw employment insurance.

The board of referees of employment insurance in Sydney also know it, especially when they are forced to deny appeals by workers even though they "feel the claimant and many more like her are being penalized by section 15 of the EI Act and would like the powers that be to have a serious look at the act and some kind of restructuring in the near future".

It is pretty clear to me and everybody except the government to understand that many seasonal workers are seasonal workers not by choice but because the very nature of their work is seasonal. In other words, the cycle which causes seasonal workers to apply numerous times for EI benefits is not the choice of the workers. It is a part of their working conditions.

Seasonal workers, their families and their children cannot wait for the government to figure out that it is only their work that is seasonal. Their needs for housing, food and clothing is not seasonal. The need to get by, day by day, with dignity is not seasonal. It is a basic right.

Private Members' Business

In my part of the country, looking at the most recent stats available from Statistics Canada, we can see that seasonal employment causes huge changes in the monthly unemployment rate where it has been as high as 20.6% in January 1999 down to 14.1% in August. By December 1999 the unemployment rate in Cape Breton had climbed back to over 20%. In our region where many workers depend on seasonal industries, even our lowest monthly unemployment rate is still much higher than the national average.

By cutting benefits to seasonal workers, the government is directly reducing the quality of life for the hundreds of thousands of people who are employed in seasonal industries in this country.

In my riding of Bras d'Or—Cape Breton, there are many people who depend on seasonal employment. Any Liberal who crosses the Canso tells anybody who will listen that it will be tourism that will save the economy of the island, that it will be tourism that will provide employment for all. Tourism is a seasonal industry.

It is my colleagues and I in the NDP who recognize that although tourism might provide a much needed push to the economy, if EI benefits for seasonal workers are not restored immediately the net gain will not be as big as the Liberals would like Cape Bretoners to believe. On one hand, it pushes for an industry that will provide seasonal work, but with the other it takes away the dignity that those workers deserve. The government should be ashamed of its attempts to sneak out the back door of its responsibility to encourage and promote economic development in Cape Breton.

Seasonal workers are not some marginal part of the workforce. They are an integral part of the workforce and they deserve to be treated with dignity. Most of the seasonal workers who have been affected by the cuts live in rural regions of the country. It is the rural regions that have really been suffering under the Liberal government's slash and burn tactics over the last few years and they are certainly not the beneficiaries of last month's budget tax cuts.

We must stop the marginalization of seasonal workers and we must stop it now. We should not need a lengthy review before benefits are restored to seasonal workers. I know I do not need that. We need to restore those benefits now.

Do we need to have a debate about the problems that seasonal workers face? Yes. Do we need to examine these problems in depth and create long term plans to reduce the recurring cycle of unemployment that seasonal workers face? Yes. Do we need to delay restoring Employment Insurance benefits by reviewing benefits? No. We need to restore benefits now. We need to commit ourselves to an extended debate here in the House and across the country in communities where people depend on seasonal employment. I would not disagree with the principle that the amendment in Motion No. 222 proposes, that is that we need to review EI benefits to seasonal workers, but first we need to restore benefits.

• (1745)

Seasonal workers will not be fooled by any attempts the government makes to increase its popularity in time for an election. The Liberal government's record shows that it deserted seasonal workers. The Liberals should be more concerned with rectifying an unjust and discriminatory policy than improving their lot at the polls.

It is through support of Motion No. 222 without the amendment, so that benefits to seasonal workers are restored immediately. The Liberals have a chance to improve their record. Who knows what it will do for them in the polls? Frankly, who cares?

The important thing is ensuring year round quality of life for all Canadians. Therefore I move:

That the amendment be amended by adding the following words after the word "review", "in country wide-public hearings".

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair finds the proposed amendment to the amendment in order. The question is on the amendment to the amendment.

Ms. Bonnie Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak on this motion, the amendment and the subamendment which calls on the government to restore employment insurance benefits to seasonal workers.

I should say from the outset that while I do not agree with the motion as it is currently worded, I would support it should it be amended as proposed by the member for Miramichi.

I also cannot support the subamendment just proposed because I can think of nothing that would slow down more the kinds of changes that the mover of the original motion is looking for than the requirement for cross-country hearings. All that testimony would have to be collected, all that testimony would have to be analyzed. It would cost the government a lot of money and the main thing is it would cost parliament a lot of time.

I share the concern of the member for Acadie—Bathurst for the well-being of Canadian seasonal workers. I must disagree with the phrasing of his motion as it now reads. The fact is that seasonal workers in Canada do have access to employment insurance benefits. Why then should we adopt a motion calling on such benefits to be restored?

I would like to take a few minutes to share some ideas and insights on how EI might do an even better job of helping unemployed workers, including seasonal workers, to improve their employability, to return to work and to prepare for the challenges

Private Members' Business

of our new economy. As members know, these have been key priorities for the government since our very first day in office.

For example, we have worked hard to spur economic growth and to promote job creation. Canada's strong economic and job growth statistics suggest that we have made considerable progress in this area. Last year alone 400,000 jobs were created, 85% of which were full time. Moreover, the national unemployment rate has dropped to 6.8%.

During 1998 jobs for young workers increased 5.3%, the strongest showing on record, while jobs for women increased over 3.2%, the biggest rise in a decade. We are also focusing our efforts on helping those workers who are out of work. In some cases this has meant setting up new programs. In other cases it has meant making sure existing programs really help unemployed workers.

• (1750)

When we looked at the old unemployment system, we realized something had to be done since the rising cost was not sustainable over time. It was not keeping pace with the new labour market and its demands. It sometimes discouraged people from working and encouraged them to become dependent on benefits, and it treated some workers unfairly, like part time and seasonal workers.

As a result we introduced the new employment insurance system which is designed to do five things. First, to be sustainable. Second, to be fairer by opening up access to many workers, including seasonal and part time workers who were not previously protected. Third, to encourage work and discourage reliance on benefits. Fourth, to target those most in need and, fifth, to help workers get back to work faster and stay employed longer.

While EI seeks to help all unemployed workers, we also recognize that some groups such as seasonal workers have special circumstances that must be addressed. EI therefore contains features that particularly benefit seasonal workers. For example, the hours based system takes into account the special nature of seasonal work which often involves long hours of work per week. As a result many seasonal workers find it easier to qualify, receive higher benefits, and collect benefits longer.

Our small weeks pilot projects make it possible for many seasonal workers to take all the work that is available and provide them with higher weekly benefits.

Family supplements help low income families with children, many of whom depend on seasonal work or the fishery. By topping up benefits and exempting them from the intensity rule, over 200,000 Canadian families benefited from this supplement last year. Reflecting its importance, our expenditures in this area increased from about \$105 million to nearly \$150 million. In addition, EI's active employment measures help many seasonal workers upgrade their skills so they can get back to work quickly, or go into another line of work. This was underlined by the recently released third annual EI monitoring and assessment report which

found that frequent users, of which seasonal workers form a significant share, have in fact benefited from features introduced since 1996.

Frequent claimants received about 43% of all regular and fishing benefits, up from 41% the year before. Benefits paid to unemployed workers in most seasonal industries increased substantially with the highest increases taking place in fishing and trapping. Those benefits were up 70%, and in mining, oil and gas they were up 52%.

Weekly benefits for frequent claimants, which were already higher than the average, increased again from \$303 to \$305, in contrast to the declines in weekly benefits seen in the two previous years. While the entitlement of frequent and seasonal claimants declined from 33.4 weeks to 32.8 weeks, this was still three weeks more than in 1995-96, thus indicating the positive impact of the switch to an hours based system. In addition, our eligibility system is reducing the impact of the intensity rule for many workers. They are finding the extra hours of work needed to qualify for EI and are receiving higher benefits than before, 8% higher than the average for regular benefits.

I urge all members to work with us to ensure that EI does the best possible job of helping unemployed workers return to work quickly, including seasonal benefits.

Mr. Derrek Konrad (Prince Albert, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, in listening to the parliamentary secretary, one would think that the government did not have any money when it comes down to the high rate that is charged to businesses and workers for these much reduced benefits. The government is pleading poverty where it need not. It could use some of that extra money it is taking to study the thing.

I am glad to have this opportunity to speak on this important issue. Although we may not agree on the solution to ensuring that seasonal workers have incomes adequate to meet their needs and aspirations, I do appreciate the concerns that motivated my colleague for Acadie—Bathurst to make this motion.

• (1755)

The hon. member stated in his speech that his motion was meant to achieve two objectives. The first is to reform employment insurance and the second is to stimulate proposals to diversify Canada's seasonal economy. Both objectives are laudable in and of themselves, but the text of his motion calls for the immediate restoration of employment insurance benefits to seasonal workers. I believe that the effect of his motion, if adopted, would be to stifle any efforts to find solutions to the structural problems currently forcing many workers into the seasonal economy.

Neither workers nor the companies that have benefited from easy access to EI would have the will to make any effort to search

for constructive solutions to the problem. There would be neither any pressure nor any incentive to make the changes he wants to see.

The hon. member rightly points out that most seasonal workers are not in favour of the seasonal nature of their jobs. Nevertheless saying it does not address the problem. There are businesses that by their very nature are seasonal. The obvious ones are in forestry, agriculture, tourism, fishing and construction. Some of these sectors pay their workers very well and those who choose to work in them are able to bridge the gaps in their employment. I have personally spoken to some people in that category. Other sectors are not able to pay enough to enable workers to make ends meet when there is a break in their employment and I have also spoken to many people in that category. The problem is not simple, but in fact extremely complex.

There are many factors that contribute to the seasonal economy. An abundance of seasonal jobs could be an indicator of a sector of the economy in decline or it could equally indicate an emerging sector of the economy. Take for instance just two examples.

A local economic development authority may decide it wants to focus on tourism which is actually an emerging sector in my hometown. At first the emphasis was on the things it knew. Sport fishing, for instance, is a summer activity that the community has built on over a number of years and guided hunting is a fall activity in the same way. These were sufficient to maintain a small hospitality sector that was subject to seasonal employment variations. In recent years, through the development of cross-country skiing and snowmobile trails, the sector has expanded its infrastructure and extended the seasons in which work is available. This has had a positive effect on the local economy and of course the employment picture. These innovations, while possible, would not have been driven by business or employment considerations in an environment that failed to reward creative solutions to the problems facing businesses in the region.

Returning employment insurance to its previous function in the seasonal economy would act as a reverse incentive to the search for ways to build and diversify local economies.

There are many factors that are considered by businesses when they decide where to locate or when to expand. Among them are location, transportation, amenities, infrastructure, educational and cultural opportunities, recreation and housing.

The other factors businesses consider are the incentives such as government subsidies and grants. Employment insurance for many years has been a tool of government to subsidize businesses, allowing them to reduce their workforces in times of reduced economic activities and to recall them when prospects improve. This has enabled businesses to avoid making long term commitments to their workers and encouraged workers to stay in depressed areas of Canada and in uneconomic sectors of the economy that are dependent on government for their survival.

Private Members' Business

In my previous life I was a businessman and I have firsthand knowledge of these matters. A part time worker of mine who was, by the way, one of the best workers I ever had, finally left to take full time employment in another part of Canada and in a different sector of the economy. He is happy with the change even though it meant major changes in his life. He is one of those people who wanted full time work but could not get it where he was geographically located, nor in a sector in which he wanted to work.

One of the reasons this loyal employee and friend left was due to changes in the EI program. One of these changes relates to the rule that differentiates between frequent and infrequent recipients of benefits under the EI program. Sometimes this works, but frequently it fails to produce the intended results.

As HRDC's 1998 EI Monitoring and Assessment Report stated:

Communities with high levels of seasonal employment were more likely to have industries that showed declining benefits levels.

• (1800)

This report was published three years after implementation of the changes. The data used in its production would have been collected well before that. Before considering any other changes to the program it would be wise for the government to initiate further studies to see if there have been significant shifts in behaviour and attitude since then. It is a well known fact that there is always considerable resistance to change and that consistent monitoring and explanation of programs is vital to the success of any initiative.

However, with respect to what I have just said, a 1999 assessment of the program tabled in the House yesterday has confirmed that EI clients in Atlantic Canada and other parts of Canada are continuing to use EI benefits to supplement their incomes on a regular basis.

Other than what I just stated, there are other good reasons for not making the changes proposed by the hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst. The most dramatic, and I would argue the most unwarranted, change would be to make EI into a wage subsidy program again rather than maintaining it as an insurance program.

Employment insurance should have as its primary goal protection against involuntary temporary job loss. Any other purpose militates against the program acting in accordance with insurance principles.

My colleague, the hon. member from Wanuskewin, has identified many of the problems and has suggested some solutions to the problems facing workers and government in implementing changes to the system. I want to restate and emphasize one of them.

Some industries have a pattern of laying off workers at the same time each year. This takes advantage of EI as surely as a worker

Private Members' Business

who manages his work time in order to take maximum advantage of the program. He suggests that differential premiums imposed on such companies would be one method of motivating companies to change their work patterns.

To lay the entire burden of the changes solely on the workforce is to address only half of the problem. I do not know whether such a scheme would be advisable or if it would work, but it certainly deserves a look.

One other change the government could and should make is to reduce the unconscionably high rates of employment insurance premiums charged that really bear no relation to the benefits to either workers or businesses. This tax on business chokes off the entrepreneurial spirit that creates the good jobs which will withstand seasonal variations and have a strong demand throughout the year.

I believe that the evidence points to the need to do a thorough review of aspects of employment insurance, with particular emphasis on the intensity rule.

I will be supporting the motion as amended, although it would have been far preferable to have the matter referred to the appropriate standing committee for study and recommendation.

I would rather have seen included in the NDP amendment a call for immediate action so that it would not depend on the leisure time that the minister might decide to devote to it at some point in the future.

It needs to be dealt with, and I thank the House for the opportunity to address this very important issue.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvan Bernier (Bonaventure—Gaspé—Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Pabok, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak to the motion brought forward by my friend, the hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst.

It is a very serious and very important issue, particularly for maritime communities, such as the Gaspé Peninsula, where I come from. The Gaspé Peninsula is a resource region where forestry and fishing are important sectors. These two resources alone indicate that we very much have to follow the seasons. It is not our fault. We are trying to diversify our economy.

I would like to have what it takes to diversify our economy, but even if 5,000 or 10,000 jobs were created tomorrow in the Gaspé Peninsula—and I am talking about manna from heaven that would give us 10,000 permanent jobs, 52 weeks a year—that would not change the fact that it is not easy to fish for lobster when the ice is three feet thick on the bay in front of my home. There are differences that people must understand.

I read the speeches of those who spoke previously. They talked about dignity. When we are reduced to asking the members opposite to recognize there is dignity in doing what the people we represent do as an occupation, something is very wrong.

• (1805)

Every normal person should understand that fishing and logging have their place. Fishing is about feeding people. Logging is about providing people with building materials. So, by definition, these are noble trades.

I do not understand why it is these seasonal trades that have suffered the most from this reform. I can understand that it is frustrating for certain people who have the opportunity of working all year round and who, on top of that, live in a province that is a little richer, Ontario, not to mention any names.

I will try to illustrate my point briefly because time flies. Let us take the same technique used for fishermen, for example, and apply it to the members of the House. Let us say that the government decides, in Cabinet, to pay us weekly wages instead of monthly or annual salaries as it does now.

As long as parliament is sitting, there is no problem, we would get paid. But if, after passing such legislation—because there are many stages in amending the Employment Insurance Act—the government decided to reduce the number of months during which we are now working—10 months at present—by two months the first year, and by two other months every year thereafter, until we ended up working no more than two months a year—I know this is an exaggeration, but it is exactly what happened to the fishermen; their pay was cut—what would the members opposite say if their salary was taken from them in that way?

They would say that it is unfair. They would say “We have been elected as members of parliament. We cannot accept another job. It is illegal. All we have left is the two months the government lets us sit”. When I left the House of Commons, I would not be allowed to sell my services to help the fishers or the other persons in my community; it would be illegal because I am a member of parliament. So I have an occupational impediment.

Can people understand that when one is, let us say, a lobster fisher, one must follow the rules set by the government according to biological data. It is said that the lobster fishing cycle cannot exceed 10 weeks and that is a verifiable fact. But the government sets the rules.

I hear members saying “let them go catch something else”. That is impossible, because the same government imposed a moratorium on groundfish. “Well, then, let them catch something else, herring”. Fine, but for that, one has to have the right license. So, the government that creates impediments is the one telling us to go do something else. Unfortunately, that is impossible.

Private Members' Business

Are we prepared to outlaw eating lobster in Canada and to say that from now on there will be no more lobster fishery? Are Canadians prepared to do that?

Some will say that I am exaggerating, but I am not, really. When we look at the fishing industry, of course, it takes a fisher and his helper in a boat. That is one thing. People will say "They are going to work for 10 weeks". But the fisher who leaves at 3 a.m. and comes back in the afternoon is looking forward to taking his boots off, as we say back home. He needs a rest. So, somebody else handles and unloads his lobster. Somebody else will process the lobsters in the plant before it ends up on your plate, in your favourite restaurant or in your nice comfortable home.

If these people move to the city in search of work, who will process the lobsters for your consumption?

There is a chance workers might not get the number of hours needed to qualify for employment insurance.

• (1810)

What I just showed is that the ten week rule is too restrictive. In some fisheries, people manage to get by. I will name another fishery, the crab fishery, which is even more dicey in terms of the moulting cycle of the species.

Some years, the fishing season does not even last six weeks. When the fishermen go out to sea in the spring, how are they to know whether mother nature will cause the waters to warm up fast and the great white to moult sooner. Therefore, in areas with an unemployment rate over 13%, plant workers need 420 hours if they have already qualified. It can be difficult to work 420 hours in six weeks. If one works 40 hours a week, that is a total of 240 hours. That is not enough to meet the 420 hour requirement.

When she gave an explanation a few moments ago, the parliamentary secretary said that the number of hours can be a good thing. Let us not forget that it always depends on the unemployment rate in a particular region. If the unemployment rate in my region exceeds 13%, I will have to work 420 hours; if it is 12%, I will have to work 455 hours, and so on.

Let us take the example of someone working as a crab fisher near an urban centre like Rimouski. Members will say that that person has an occupation and should get the same thing as the others. But no. If the unemployment rate in the Rimouski area is around 10%, it may take 680 hours for that person to become eligible.

That means that we could see certain categories of occupations disappear in certain regions. That is why I made that proposal, to give people food for thought. If we no longer want this to be covered by the employment insurance program, why not define

what a seasonal occupation is and then try to find an appropriate program? Otherwise, we will have to say that we are willing to see those occupations disappear.

I will make another proposal. While we determine which jobs are seasonal ones, we should consider which tools we can offer to these fishers who will have to learn to live on six weeks of work with no employment insurance if they no longer qualify.

Would the government consider prohibiting any imports of crustaceans or of goods now produced in Canada? No one would be allowed to import these products and Canadians would have to pay big money to get these products from our fishers, because we have not supported them. This is conceivable. Is the government prepared to do that? But it says "No, this is free trade, this is globalization".

Is the Canadian government saying that, because of globalization, fishers in the Gaspé Peninsula will be paid the same as Filipino fishermen, who live in a warm, sunny country and who can get by on little food because they do not have to contend with a northern climate? They are paid \$15 a week. Do members know how much it costs to shop for groceries now? A litre of milk costs the same in Hull as it does in Gaspé. In that sense, why would people in the Gaspé not be entitled to the same amount?

In short, I urge the House to take a serious look at the hon. member's proposal, and I invite members opposite, particularly those from Ontario, to accept to share the wealth with those who helped build this country, at least as long as we are still part of it.

Mr. Jean Dubé (Madawaska—Restigouche, PC): Mr. Speaker, I too am pleased to take part in the debate on a motion by a colleague from New Brunswick who represents a riding with a very high rate of unemployment. We all know which former MP and former minister used to represent that riding. I think that everyone remembers him when the subject of employment insurance reform comes up. He is none other than Doug Young.

• (1815)

During the last election campaign, Doug Young found out what people in the very high unemployment areas thought about his reform. We have seen the impact of that reform on individuals and families in those areas. I would like to congratulate my colleague for Acadie—Bathurst for his motion.

When I first came to this House in 1997, as one of the MPs from my party on the Standing Committee on Human Resources, I presented a motion at its first meeting. I asked the committee to carry out an immediate assessment of employment insurance reform. My colleague over the way, the parliamentary secretary, was also on that committee. She surely remembers that motion by a newly arrived young MP.

Private Members' Business

Unfortunately, the motion was defeated. Today, here we are still at the study and assessment stage, when we could have made real changes.

[*English*]

Years have gone by since this reform, and I have to say that people have lost their homes. People have seen their families divided. In many cases it was because of the stresses that were brought on them. Monetary stress and lack of employment certainly were contributors. In these regions the government is responsible for this because the reform has hurt Canadians and has hurt seasonal workers.

There are regions of Canada that have economies that are different from the others. My region of New Brunswick has many seasonal workers. There are people who work in the forest industry. We have difficult winters. These are realities. There are not all types of industries popping up every day. When the government brought in the reform it did not pay attention to these very seasonal workers.

My colleague from South Shore, Nova Scotia is here. He has brought to my attention many, many files of people who are looking for work, people who are running out of employment insurance, people who have nowhere else to go and have no choice but to go on income assistance and wait until that industry re-opens.

It is pretty sad when the surplus in employment insurance is pegged at about \$25 billion. Last year and recently too, the Minister of Finance bragged in the House about the balanced budget. That budget without the \$25 billion employment insurance account would not be balanced at all. Certainly there is an imbalance.

I read the report that was tabled in the House yesterday by the minister. It is frustrating to read these things. One of the civil servants who worked on the reform to employment insurance was in my office at the very beginning. He told me that people from Atlantic Canada should get a job like he did, just to give hon. members the idea.

There is a minister over there from P.E.I. We all know who he is. He has in his own riding people who are suffering from this reform and he has the gall to stand here and laugh at what we are saying. It is unbelievable. He should be standing and defending those very people.

• (1820)

I read a report which said that many people may be faking illness when they quit their jobs. Imagine. It is typical though. I am not surprised. They are faking their illness. Nurses across the country have been cut back, slashed and have to do the work that two nurses used to do. They are burnt out and yes, some must call in sick. However the report says people are faking.

[*Translation*]

In the employment insurance assessment report, the statement is made that “overall, we can say that there are indications that some elements of the reform are working relatively well”.

I must tell you that, when I see people in my riding office, people who have lost their homes, families that have been split up, and when I look at the comments in the evaluation, I wonder if these are the government’s indications that the reform is working well. It is absolutely incredible.

The report also says “That is why the Government of Canada made a legislative commitment to monitor and assess the impacts of the reform for five years”. It says “monitor and assess”. What the member for Acadie—Bathurst is asking for is this:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should take immediate action to restore Employment Insurance benefits to seasonal workers.

The motion says immediate. Here is a typical amendment by a member of the government that introduced the reform. Note the difference. It goes like this:

That the government should...review the issue of employment insurance benefits for seasonal workers.

Here, we have the word review.

With people suffering since the reform, the government still wants to “review” what happened. I can tell the House that we have been hearing what the Liberal government wants to do with an election in the offing; it wants to review the matter.

I can also tell the House that Canadians have not forgotten what happened. The government thinks that the Atlantic provinces have forgotten as well, but it is mistaken. The people of these provinces have not forgotten Doug Young; they have not forgotten EI reform.

As a member, I will make it my business to see that they remember what the government did to them. That is my intention. We must protect Canadians throughout this country. There must be a balance.

Balance seems to be lacking in this reform. We have a great country. We are trying to build a strong country. We are trying to keep the country together. There are many differences, various cultures, and different regions with differing resources.

If we want to succeed as a country, we must focus on balance. What the government has done is unacceptable, and I once again congratulate the member for Acadie—Bathurst on his motion.

Private Members' Business

• (1825)

[English]

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the 1996 Liberal government changes to UIC did three things. They made it harder to qualify for benefits, they reduced benefits so there was less money per week, and they shortened the period of time that benefits could be collected. The predictable result of all this is now the EI fund shows a surplus of \$600 million a month, not per year, per month. Some \$7.2 billion per year is being taken out of the employment insurance fund and being denied as benefits to the people who need it most, the most vulnerable, to be used for whatever the Liberal government likes.

What does that mean in my riding of Winnipeg Centre, the third poorest riding in the country? It takes \$20.8 million a year out of my riding. It is sucked right out of there down to Ottawa. Money that used to be transferred to Winnipeg for the use of income maintenance for desperately unemployed and poor people no longer comes to my riding. Imagine the impact that has on a relatively small community like my riding. Imagine what we would do if we could attract a business that had a payroll of \$20.8 million. We could pave the streets with gold to attract them to our riding. The inverse is also true. The impact is the same in reverse when it gets pulled out. And that is just Winnipeg Centre.

In St. John's, Newfoundland, \$75 million a year is pulled out just by the 1996 changes. I wish my colleague from Montreal were still here. There is \$512 million a year less in income maintenance for the unemployed in the city of Montreal alone. This was by design of the Liberal government so that it could use the employment insurance fund as a cash cow, as a revenue generator, so that it could use the money for whatever it wanted to and certainly for anything but income maintenance for unemployed people.

These changes have left some staggering statistics. Less than 40% of unemployed workers now qualify for any EI benefits. What kind of insurance fund is that if people have a less than 40% chance of ever collecting? Less than 25% of women, as verified in a recent report, qualify for any benefits. Less than 11% of young women qualify for any benefits. What kind of a program could possibly survive such a failure to achieve its mandate for what it was set out to do? Less than 15% of youth qualify for any benefits.

The point I am trying to make is this system is broken. It is busted. The wheels have fallen off it and Canadians know that. Therefore the motion of the member for Acadie—Bathurst is absolutely appropriate, timely, practical and necessary. Every member in the House should enthusiastically support it so we can all take a look at the employment insurance system and see what is wrong with it and hopefully put it back on track.

As I have said in the past, if money is taken off a person's paycheque for a specific purpose and then is used for something

completely different, at best it is a breach of trust. In the worst case scenario it is out and out fraud to tell workers that money will be deducted from their cheques so that if they happen to become unemployed they will qualify for a benefit and when that worst case scenario happens and they find themselves unemployed, we say "Sorry, the rules have changed. There is no money, no income maintenance. Your family does without". I believe it is a breach of trust.

To add insult to injury, to take that money off workers' paycheques, deny the benefits to the unemployed and then use the money out of general revenues to give the wealthy a tax cut is some perverted form of Robin Hood that robs from the poor and gives to the rich. It is fundamentally wrong and Canadians will not tolerate it.

Here are the changes we would like to see when the review comes forward. At least 70% of all unemployed workers should be receiving EI, at least 70%. Then we would know the program works somewhat. Weekly benefits should be maintained at 60% of a claimant's weekly pay. That is a basic. The divisor rule, the intensity rule and the benefit clawbacks all have to be eliminated. Those are the changes that were made which suck the level of benefits down to such a ridiculously low level. The EI fund must be separated from general revenues. It should be its own independent, stand alone fund that is there for a specific and dedicated purpose, which is to provide income maintenance and possibly training for unemployed workers to help get them back into the workforce.

• (1830)

EI must not be used as a federal debt reduction instrument. It must not be used for tax cuts. It must not be used for spending on government programs. It is a dedicated insurance fund, nothing more, nothing less. To use it for anything else is fraudulent and a breach of trust.

The employment insurance system is in an emergency situation right now. It does not work. It is broken and the wheels have fallen off. Canadian workers know this. This is the second and third year now that seasonal workers have had to deal with this inadequate system. This is the second or third year in a row that they have had to deal with reduced benefits.

I used to run the carpenters union and I know the people in that union very well. There are examples of guys who entered the system this year who are getting \$120 a week as their benefit, whereas two or three years ago they were receiving \$425 a week. That is the difference the intensity rule, the divisor rule and the clawback rule make to seasonal construction workers who pay into the fund.

I remember when I was a carpenter we would be paying \$45 or \$50 from every paycheque into the fund which was matched by our employer so we would receive benefits when we happened to find ourselves seasonally unemployed. That does not happen anymore.

Private Members' Business

Perhaps the most cynical thing the government did when it came to the building trades was to no longer fund the apprenticeship programs through EI. The government used to buy blocks of seats at the community college so the apprentices could go to school without having to pay tuition because they and their employers were already paying every hour that they worked in the industry. The government stopped that.

Today a first year carpenter's apprentice has to pay a \$600 to \$800 tuition fee. He does not get his first two week waiting period paid for anymore. There are no allowances for travel or child care. All those have been eliminated. The government now says that we need a national training strategy. Well it just gutted a damn good national apprenticeship training strategy by pulling the rug out from under it when it made these changes to UIC in 1996.

All of these things combined add up to gross failure and all the more reason why this motion is entirely appropriate, timely and necessary.

Ms. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me begin by saying that I am confident that members of all parties will support the amendment proposed by the hon. member for Miramichi which asks that the government take immediate action to review the employment insurance benefits for seasonal workers.

Canada's economy is such that we have always had and always will have seasonal industries. These industries are vital to our economic well-being. However, these industries by definition employ people for only part of the year. We must always remain watchful to ensure that our economic and social programs do not exclude those workers from the rewards and benefits of living and working in Canada.

Let me remind the House that the Government of Canada introduced employment insurance after long consultation and much deliberation. Even then, we built in a monitoring and review process that would report back each year for five years.

The new employment insurance package was aimed precisely at ensuring fair and equitable treatment of all Canadian workers, whether their work was seasonal, year round, part time or full time.

Let us not forget the very good reasons why an extensive redesign of the EI program was carried out. The old unemployment insurance system was questioned for its sustainability. It was not responsive to the new labour market that prevails in Canada. It tended to discourage attachment to the labour force.

What is most pertinent to Motion No. 222 is the fact that the system was unfair in its treatment of some workers, most notably part time and seasonal workers.

The resulting employment insurance system is designed specifically to be sustainable and fair, while encouraging work and

ensuring benefits are provided for those in the greatest need. Of course the ultimate goal is to help workers get back to work faster and stay employed longer.

EI also recognizes the reality of Canada's labour market where seasonal workers are prevalent in certain industries. Seasonal workers have particular needs and the program does indeed have special features built in to assist seasonal workers. Is it enough? Possibly not.

The hours based system takes into account the fact that seasonal work often involves long hours of work per week. As a result, many seasonal workers therefore find it easier to qualify and receive higher benefits for longer periods.

• (1835)

Another example is the introduction of small weeks pilot projects. These would allow seasonal workers to take all work that is available, even a few hours a week, without it resulting in a lower benefit rate at their next claim.

Also, the family supplement targets low income families with children by topping up their benefits each year. Those families are also exempt from the application of the intensity rule which normally reduces benefits for claimants who make repeated use of employment insurance.

Then there are the active employment measures under the EI program which are helping many seasonal workers upgrade their skills, enabling them to get back into the workforce more quickly.

The effects of the EI program are being monitored continuously. There is a requirement for monitoring and assessment reports for the five years following its introduction. Yesterday the Minister of Human Resources Development tabled in the House the third annual report, which showed that EI has affected frequent claimants less than claimants overall and that benefits paid to unemployed workers in most seasonal industries have increased substantially. While the entitlement of frequent and seasonal claimants declined from 33 weeks to 32 weeks, this was still three weeks more than in 1995 when the EI regime was introduced.

In short, frequent and seasonal claimants appear to benefit from the switch to an hours based eligibility system, even though frequent and seasonal claimants often have fewer insured hours during the year than other claimants.

I believe that the EI regime provides better coverage for seasonal workers compared to the system it replaced. Is it perfect? No, it is not. Is there room for improvement and change? I hope so. As for providing for the well-being of all Canadians, without doubt the government can stand on its record. More than 427,000 were created last year alone and 85% of them were full time jobs.

Private Members' Business

We need to make changes in the employment program, especially for seasonal workers and those men and women in Atlantic Canada who work in the fisheries. We need to find some improvements. I look forward to working with my colleagues to ensure that happens.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): When the bill next comes to the House, the hon. member will have, if she desires, about six minutes remaining in debate.

The time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the order paper.

It being 6.38 p.m., this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6.38 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Thursday, March 23, 2000

Canadian Human Rights Commission			
The Deputy Speaker	5103		
ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS			
Government Response to Petitions			
Mr. Lee	5103		
Interparliamentary Delegations			
Mr. Graham	5103		
Committees of the House			
Procedure and House Affairs			
Mr. Lee	5103		
Income Tax Act			
Bill C-459. Introduction and first reading	5103		
Mr. Pankiw	5103		
(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)	5103		
Marriage (Prohibited Degrees) Act			
Bill C-460. Introduction and first reading	5103		
Mr. Pankiw	5103		
(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)	5104		
Statutory Instruments Act			
Bill C-461. Introduction and first reading	5104		
Mr. Pankiw	5104		
(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)	5104		
Petitions			
Child Pornography			
Mr. Harb	5104		
Health Care Profession			
Mr. Vellacott	5104		
Child Pornography			
Mr. Vellacott	5104		
Taxation			
Mr. Vellacott	5104		
Divorce Act			
Mr. Wilfert	5104		
Questions on the order paper			
Mr. Lee	5104		
GOVERNMENT ORDERS			
Canadian Institutes of Health Research Act			
Bill C-13. Report stage	5104		
Mrs. Gagnon	5104		
Mr. Harb	5106		
Mr. Sauvageau	5107		
Division on Motion No. 1 deferred	5109		
Division on Motion No. 9 deferred	5109		
Division on Motion No. 12 deferred	5109		
Division on Motion No. 13 deferred	5109		
Division on Motion No. 14 deferred	5109		
Division on Motion No. 20 deferred	5109		
Division on Motion No. 48 deferred	5110		
Division on Motion No. 49 deferred	5110		
		Division on Motion No. 50 deferred	5110
		Mr. Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)	5110
		Motion No. 2	5110
		Mr. Ménard	5110
		Motion No. 3	5110
		Mr. Nault	5110
		Motion No. 4	5110
		Mr. Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)	5110
		Motion No. 8	5110
		Mr. Ménard	5110
		Motion No. 10	5110
		Mr. Ménard	5110
		Motion No. 15	5110
		Mr. Nault	5110
		Motion No. 16	5110
		Mr. Ménard	5110
		Motions Nos. 17, 19, 22, 25 and 26	5110
		Mr. Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)	5111
		Motions Nos. 27, 28 and 29	5111
		Mr. Ménard	5111
		Motion No. 30	5111
		Mr. Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)	5111
		Motions Nos. 31, 32, 33 and 34	5111
		Mr. Ménard	5111
		Motion No. 35	5111
		Mr. Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)	5111
		Motion No. 36	5111
		Mr. Ménard	5111
		Motions Nos. 37, 38, 41 and 42	5112
		Mr. Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)	5112
		Motion No. 45	5112
		Mr. Ménard	5112
		Motion No. 46	5112
		Mr. Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)	5112
		Motions Nos. 47, 51, 52 and 55	5112
		Mr. Ménard	5112
		Mr. Breitzkreuz (Yorkton—Melville)	5114
		Mr. Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)	5115
		Mr. Bachand (Saint-Jean)	5116
		Mr. Harb	5117
		Mrs. Gagnon	5118
		Mr. Szabo	5119
		Motion No. 56	5120
		Mrs. Barnes	5120
		Mr. Charbonneau	5121
		Amendment	5122
		Mr. Ménard	5123
		Mr. Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)	5123
		Mr. Ménard	5123
		Mrs. Barnes	5124
		Mr. Harb	5124
		Mr. Keddy	5124
		Mr. Myers	5124
		Mr. Harb	5124
		Mr. Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)	5124
		Mr. Ménard	5124
		Mr. Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)	5124
		Mr. Myers	5125
		Mr. Label	5125

Mr. Gauthier	5125
Mr. Szabo	5125
Mr. Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)	5126
Ms. Catterall	5126
(Motion and amendment withdrawn)	5126
Mr. Lebel	5126
Mr. Lebel	5127
Mr. Godin (Acadie—Bathurst)	5127
Mr. Lebel	5127
Mr. Szabo	5128
Mr. Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)	5128
Division on Motion No. 2 deferred	5129
Division on Motion No. 8 deferred	5129
Division on Motion No. 10 deferred	5129
Division on Motion No. 15 deferred	5129
Division on Motion No. 16 deferred	5129
Division on Motion No. 19 deferred	5130
Division on Motion No. 22 deferred	5130
Division on Motion No. 25 deferred	5130
Division on Motion No. 29 deferred	5130
Division on Motion No. 36 deferred	5130
Division on Motion No. 41 deferred	5130
Division on Motion No. 42 deferred	5130
Division on Motion No. 51 deferred	5131
Division on Motion No. 52 deferred	5131
Division on Motion No. 55 deferred	5131
Ms. Catterall	5131
Divisions on motions deferred	5131
Citizenship of Canada Act	
Bill C-16. Second reading	5131
Mr. Bigras	5131
Mr. Coderre	5133
Mr. Bigras	5133
Mr. Bigras	5135
Mr. Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	5135

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Homelessness	
Mrs. Redman	5137
Racism	
Mr. Pankiw	5137
Fisheries	
Mr. Sekora	5137
Elian Gonzalez	
Mr. Robinson	5137
Family Services of Peel	
Mr. Mahoney	5138
Visual and Media Arts	
Ms. Bennett	5138
Patrick Kelly	
Mr. Gilmour	5138
Semaine d'action contre le racisme	
Mr. Bigras	5138
Kashmir	
Mr. Malhi	5138
Revenue Canada	
Mr. Ritz	5139

Canadian Economy	
Mr. Lavigne	5139
Liberal Party of Canada	
Mrs. Tremblay	5139
Granby Zoo	
Ms. St-Jacques	5139
Maple Syrup Season	
Mr. Clouthier	5139
Government Grants	
Mr. Johnston	5140
Atlantic Fisheries	
Ms. Vautour	5140
The Budget	
Mr. Paradis	5140

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Export Development Corporation	
Mr. Manning	5140
Mr. Pettigrew	5141
Mr. Manning	5141
Mr. Pettigrew	5141
Mr. Manning	5141
Mr. Pettigrew	5141
Mr. Strahl	5141
Mr. Pettigrew	5141
Mr. Strahl	5141
Mr. Pettigrew	5141
Human Resources Development	
Mr. Duceppe	5142
Mrs. Stewart (Brant)	5142
Mr. Duceppe	5142
Mr. Cauchon	5142
Mr. Crête	5142
Mrs. Stewart (Brant)	5142
Mr. Crête	5142
Mrs. Stewart (Brant)	5142
Health	
Ms. McDonough	5142
Mr. Rock	5143
Ms. McDonough	5143
Mr. Rock	5143
Human Resources Development	
Mr. Dubé (Madawaska—Restigouche)	5143
Mrs. Stewart (Brant)	5143
Mr. Dubé (Madawaska—Restigouche)	5143
Mrs. Stewart (Brant)	5143
Export Development Corporation	
Mr. Obhrai	5143
Mr. Pettigrew	5143
Mr. Obhrai	5143
Mr. Pettigrew	5144
Human Resources Development	
Mrs. Gagnon	5144
Mrs. Stewart (Brant)	5144
Mrs. Gagnon	5144
Mrs. Stewart (Brant)	5144
Export Development Corporation	
Mr. Penson	5144

Mr. Pettigrew	5144
Mr. Penson	5144
Mr. Pettigrew	5144
Human Resources Development	
Mr. Gauthier	5145
Mrs. Stewart (Brant)	5145
Mr. Gauthier	5145
Mrs. Stewart (Brant)	5145
Export Development Corporation	
Ms. Meredith	5145
Mr. Pettigrew	5145
Mr. Penson	5145
Ms. Meredith	5145
Mr. Pettigrew	5145
Gasoline Pricing	
Mr. Brien	5146
Mr. Manley	5146
Agriculture	
Mrs. Ur	5146
Mr. McGuire	5146
Human Resources Development	
Mr. Vellacott	5146
Mrs. Stewart (Brant)	5146
Mr. Vellacott	5146
Employment Insurance	
Mrs. Dockrill	5146
Mrs. Stewart (Brant)	5147
Mr. Godin (Acadie—Bathurst)	5147
Mrs. Stewart (Brant)	5147
Fisheries	
Mr. Keddy	5147
Mr. Dhaliwal	5147
Mr. Keddy	5147
Mr. Dhaliwal	5147
National Parks	
Mr. Limoges	5147
Ms. Copps	5147
Human Resources Development	
Mr. Chatters	5148
CINAR	
Mr. Bergeron	5148
Mr. Cauchon	5148
Taxation	
Mr. Nystrom	5148
Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard)	5148
Fisheries	
Mr. Muise	5148
Mr. Dhaliwal	5148
The Environment	
Mr. Reed	5149
Ms. Torsney	5149
Human Resources Development	
Mr. McNally	5149
Mrs. Stewart (Brant)	5149

Iraq	
Mrs. Debien	5149
Mr. Axworthy	5149
National Parks	
Mr. Gruending	5149
Ms. Copps	5149
Presence in Gallery	
The Speaker	5150
Points of Order	
Oral Question Period	
Mr. Strahl	5150
The Speaker	5150
Business of the House	
Mr. Strahl	5150
Mr. Boudria	5150

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Citizenship of Canada Act	
Bill C-16. Second reading	5151
Mr. Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	5151
Mr. Price	5152
Ms. Caplan	5155
Mr. Price	5156
Mr. Grewal	5156
Mr. Mayfield	5159
Mr. Grewal	5160
Mr. Dumas	5160
Mr. Gruending	5163
Mr. Earle	5164
Mr. Hilstrom	5166
Mr. Earle	5166
Mr. Telegdi	5166
Mr. Earle	5167
Mr. Hart	5167
Mr. Mayfield	5169
Mr. Hart	5169
Mr. Hanger	5169
Mr. Mayfield	5169
Mr. Hanger	5169
Mr. Kilger	5170
Mr. Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	5171
Mr. Hanger	5171
(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee)	5172
Business of the House	
The Deputy Speaker	5172

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Employment insurance	
Motion	5172
The Deputy Speaker	5172
Mrs. Dockrill	5172
Amendment to the amendment	5173
Ms. Brown	5173
Mr. Konrad	5174
Mr. Bernier	5176
Mr. Dubé (Madawaska—Restigouche)	5177
Mr. Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	5179
Ms. Sgro	5180

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