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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, February 9, 1999

Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, February 9, 1999

The House met at 10 a.m.

[English]

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Peter Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 10 petitions.

* * *

• (1005)

CANADA LABOUR CODE

Mr. Richard Marceau (Charlesbourg, BQ): moved for leave to introduce Bill C-470, an act to amend the Canada Labour Code, the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act, and the Public Service Staff Relations Act (prohibited provision in a collective agreement).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to introduce a bill aimed at banning orphan clauses from any collective agreement which might be covered by one of three pieces of legislation: the Canada Labour Code, the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act, and the Public Service Staff Relations Act.

The purpose is to eliminate any discriminatory provision, particularly those affecting young people and setting out working conditions for them which are often not as good as those of their elders.

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

PETITIONS

BILL C-68

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present 104 more pages of petitions with 2,355 more signatures of concerned citizens from nine different provinces, including Quebec.

The government has finally united Canada from coast to coast and Canadians are united in opposition to the federal government's fatally flawed gun registration.

My constituents have asked me to keep a running total of repeal Bill C-68 petitions. Since last April I have introduced 1,855 pages of petitions with a total of 43,265 signatures. The petitioners are demanding an end to the government's billion dollar gun registration scheme because it will do nothing to curtail the criminal use of firearms, it is not a cost effective way to address the violent crime problem in Canada, it is putting tens of thousands of jobs in jeopardy, and it is opposed by the vast majority of police on the street and four provinces and two territories, comprising more than 50% of Canada's population.

It may be interesting to note that there is an increasing number of petitions coming from Quebec.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I am pleased to present a petition on the subject of human rights from a number of Canadians, including from my own riding of Mississauga South.

The petitioners draw to the attention of the House that human rights abuses continue to be rampant around the world in many countries, especially Indonesia. The petitioners also point out that Canada continues to be recognized as the champion of human rights internationally. Therefore the petitioners call upon parliament to continue to condemn human rights abuses around the world and also to seek to bring to justice those responsible for such abuses.

BULK WATER EXPORTS

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise pursuant to

Routine Proceedings

Standing Order 36 to present petitions from citizens throughout British Columbia who are calling upon the government to take action on the issue of providing sovereignty over Canada's water. They ask for a ban on bulk water exports to the United States.

This brings to 29,215 the number of residents of the Kamloops area who have signed this or similar petitions.

PEACE TAX LEGISLATION

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present petitions this morning on two subjects. The first petition is signed by residents of Alberta and British Columbia and notes that the Constitution Act, 1982 guarantees freedom of conscience and religion in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

• (1010)

The petitioners urge parliament to establish peace tax legislation by passing into law a private member's bill which recognizes the right of conscientious objectors to not pay for the military and within which the government would declare its commitment to apply that portion of taxes that was to be used for military purposes toward peaceful purposes such as peace education, war relief, humanitarian and environmental aid, housing and other peaceful purposes.

MULTILATERAL AGREEMENT ON INVESTMENT

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition deals with the MAI, the multilateral agreement on investment. The petitioners express grave concern about the implications of the MAI for Canada's sovereignty and they call upon parliament to consider the enormous implications to Canada with the signing of the MAI. They ask that it be put before the House for open debate and that a national referendum be held for the people of Canada to decide.

MACKAY TASK FORCE

Mr. John Solomon (Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I am pleased to stand on behalf of many constituents of Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre and other people across the country. This petition pertains to the MacKay task force recommendations.

There are a number of people from Beauval, Strasbourg, Regina, Lanigan, Earl Grey, Duval and a number of communities who have signed this petition. They are very concerned about the MacKay task force report which recommends that the banks get into the insurance business. These people support the independent insurance brokers of Canada. They do not support the banks taking over the business of the independent brokers association and its mem-

bers. They call upon parliament to totally reject the recommendations of the MacKay task force report pertaining to the entry of banks into the casualty and property insurance markets. They strongly urge parliamentarians not to give in to the pressure of the banks on this matter.

* * *

[Translation]

QUESTION ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

[English]

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. On March 11, 1998 I placed Question No. Q-84 on the order paper, asking how many violent crimes had been investigated by the RCMP and how many involved the use of registered and unregistered firearms. In accordance with Standing Order 39 I asked for a written answer within 45 days. My constituents have been waiting 335 days.

The commissioner of the RCMP wrote to me on July 6, 1998 referring to his answer to Question No. Q-84. The RCMP gave its response to the government 218 days ago.

I raised this point on October 28 and again on December 7. The parliamentary secretary said that the response was being finalized.

Question No. Q-84 is the oldest unanswered question on the order paper. For the third time, when is the government going to give my constituents the RCMP's answer to this important question?

Mr. Peter Adams: Mr. Speaker, the member is quite correct, he did raise this matter with me before and I looked into it on the last occasion. The answer was being prepared. I assure him that I will this very day once again look into the whereabouts of the response to Question No. Q-84.

The Deputy Speaker: Shall the remaining questions stand?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Peter Adams: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I apologize for interrupting the proceedings as I know this is an important occasion; however, a member of the official opposition has asked if we could have unanimous consent to return to committee reports.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the House give its consent to revert to presentation of reports by committees?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 21st report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts relating to chapter 10 of the September 1998 report of the Auditor General of Canada on the Canadian Human Rights Commission and the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal panel. Pursuant to Standing Order 109 of the House of Commons, the committee requests the government to table a comprehensive response to this report.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1015)

[*English*]

SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY—FRESHWATER RESOURCES

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP) moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should, in co-operation with the provinces, place an immediate moratorium on the export of bulk freshwater shipments and interbasin transfers and should introduce legislation to prohibit bulk freshwater exports and interbasin transfers in order to assert Canada's sovereign right to protect, preserve and conserve our freshwater resources for future generations.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak on behalf of my caucus today with respect to this motion. I will read it into the record one more time:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should, in co-operation with the provinces, place an immediate moratorium on the export of bulk freshwater shipments and interbasin transfers and should introduce legislation to prohibit bulk freshwater exports and interbasin transfers in order to assert Canada's sovereign right to protect, preserve and conserve our freshwater resources for future generations.

May I begin by saying I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys.

This is a very important motion. We have hope on this side of the House, in the NDP particularly, that there may come a day when parliament could express itself perhaps even unanimously in favour of this motion. It would be a historical moment. For the first time as far as I know, parliament would have said clearly that there is a need for the government to act immediately with respect to a moratorium, and that there is a need for the government to proceed quickly to bring in legislation in the context as well of a larger national water policy that has been absent since the beginning of time in spite of Liberal promises to the contrary.

Supply

There have been many occasions when the Liberal Party in government and in opposition made commitments to bring in a national water policy, to ban the bulk export of freshwater from Canada and we have had no action on this. We asked the question of the government in the House last Thursday and we had no commitment to legislation or to a moratorium.

This motion forces the government, we hope, to focus its thoughts on what needs to be done here and to join with us and hopefully with colleagues from other parties in the House of Commons in saying something decisive today, on February 9, 1999, about what Canada's intention is with respect to the export of freshwater, particularly with respect to bulk freshwater exports and interbasin transfers.

Water is something that all Canadians have a common image of in our country. Water is as Canadian as hockey, the RCMP and the beaver. We want to make sure that we do not have happen to water what has already happened to hockey and to the RCMP. We know that hockey has gone south for all intents and purposes and has become Americanized. It has become an export over which we have no control. This is very much at the expense of the way in which hockey used to be done in our own country. We know the RCMP has sold its copyright to Disney.

Let us make water a last stand. Let us make sure that at least when it comes to freshwater resources, we as a country show some fortitude and determination, that what has happened to many other aspects of our country both with respect to natural resources and culture will not happen to water. This is the intent of this motion.

This motion is very important and I urge the government to consider it. The government may also have an opportunity to consider, in the course of reflecting upon our amendment, their own dark side on these issues. The dark side for the Liberals on this issue as in others is the international trade and investment agreements, in particular those which they have had a penchant for signing even after they ran against them and even after they said they would not sign them.

• (1020)

Let us say the government votes for this motion, and the Liberals pat themselves on the back about their determination not to permit the bulk export of freshwater. We do not want to be in the situation three, five, or ten years from now where the Liberals say then what they are saying now about magazines and about drug patent legislation. "Oh well, yes, we were against extending the drug patent legislation and we are for protecting the Canadian magazine industry, but what can we do because we are in NAFTA and we are in the WTO. It really does not matter what we said before. It does not really matter that we vigorously opposed the drug patent legislation or that we were vigorously in favour of protecting the Canadian cultural sector. We are hapless victims. We are at the

Supply

mercy of these trade agreements". Of course many of those agreements, particularly NAFTA and the WTO, the Liberals themselves signed.

We have had enough of this self-inflicted powerlessness. That is why we intend to move an amendment which would ask the government to go beyond the initial motion and give some indication of whether or not the Liberals would have the fortitude on behalf of the Canadian people to not be a party to any international agreement which in future was found to compel us to export freshwater in bulk against our will.

I look forward to that debate. I look forward to hearing from other members of my party on this. I also look forward to hearing from the Liberals as to whether or not this is just an expression of goodwill and good intentions that will once again be thwarted by the victim mentality that has overcome Canadian governments in the last several administrations, whereby they want to do the right thing but they cannot because of the trade agreements they have signed.

We also bring forward this motion in the context of knowing that we need a much fuller debate in this country, not just about exports but about water management in general. It is not just a question of exports, although the motion addresses itself specifically to that. It is about the lack of a national water policy in general. It is about the lack of any commitment on the part of this government or any other government to make sure that water, even when it is not exported, remains in the public domain. It is about water not becoming privatized as it has become in so many other countries and not being treated like any other commodity such as oil, gas, wheat or whatever.

Canadians think and say very clearly that they see water as being very different. They see water as having a national dimension and also an environmental dimension that they feel should not be threatened by coming to view water as any other commodity.

To those who say, quite rightly in the geopolitical sense but wrongly in principle, that water will be the oil of the 21st century, we say no. We do not want water to be treated like oil. We do not want water to be treated like any other commercially exploited natural resource.

By this motion today we hope to contribute along with others who are acting in an extra-parliamentary sense, like the Council of Canadians who I believe are having a conference and a press conference on water today. We hope to stimulate a national debate about conservation of water, about a national water policy, about water management and about the environmental dimension of the water question.

Having said that we should not be involved in the bulk export of freshwater from Canada, I think we should also admit as a country that we cannot do this from the high ground of being a country that

looks after its water, of being a country that is committed to strict conservation of water and therefore in a position to lecture other countries about water conservation. We are not in that position.

• (1025)

Let us not be self-righteous about it. Let us admit that not only do we not want to export water but we have a need to treat the water which we keep within our boundaries a lot better than we do and to conserve it.

There are all these things. There is the environmental dimension. There is the public-private dimension. There are the free trade and investment agreements which could prohibit us from prohibiting bulk water exports.

I look forward to hearing from other members of my party and members from other parties on these issues today. Hopefully at the end of the day, we can look back on this day as a time when we entered a new political period with respect to the attitude of parliament and the country toward our freshwater resources and look to the government to finally act on this particular issue.

Mr. John Finlay (Oxford, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have listened with interest to my colleague across the way. I agree with much of what he says, certainly about conservation, the environmental nature of water and so on, and let us not be self-righteous. I do not think we are doing nearly a good enough job on looking after our water.

We understand that we have about 25% of the world's freshwater. Our population however is minuscule compared to that. I know my friend is compassionate and concerned about everyone and about Canada's place in the world. I would like to know what he thinks the eventual outcome will be. Are we going to build a wall? Are we going to mount machine guns? Are we going to stop the rivers flowing south? What are we going to do when people outside our borders need freshwater, as they will in a few years or more and we have it all?

Mr. Bill Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, the member raises a good question. It is precisely why we think the government should bring in legislation. It is precisely why we think there should be a national water policy. In the context of actually having something on the floor of the House of Commons, that is to say in the context of actually having the government act, these kinds of issues could be addressed.

I do not think we should assume that under any condition or under all conditions that we would be open to this sort of moral demand which the member talks about. We need to create a regime in which if we want to make exceptions when there are people who need rather than want our water we could do so. We are not anywhere near that particular point in time. We are at a point now where our water resources are vulnerable to the trade agreements and vulnerable to the absence of a national water policy.

Supply

Mr. John Solomon (Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I just want to say a couple of words and then ask my colleague the member for Winnipeg—Transcona a question.

I congratulate the member for moving this motion and the seconder, the member for Yukon, and the NDP caucus for taking this issue to the public once again and for trying to get the consent and support of the House of Commons in this very important issue.

As Canadians know, we need three elements for life on this planet. We need good soil, clean air and water.

I want the members and the people who are watching this debate to understand that we have international agreements when it comes to the flowing of rivers and other bodies of water south. These agreements are agreed upon. We have to release a certain amount of the water that flows into these basins and that is something that will remain status quo. We are not planning to dam the waters if this motion is passed. Those waters will continue to flow freely.

We are very concerned about the great water supplies that we have. I do agree with the hon. member for Winnipeg—Transcona that we should be husbanding our resources. We should be conserving them. We should be recycling water. We should be reusing water as many countries are now doing. We have not done enough of that.

The question I want to ask is extremely important to many Canadians, not just on the issue of water but on other issues pertaining to trade agreements. The United States has in all its trade agreements, whether the NAFTA or the WTO, a public interest clause which says that if it is in the public interest of the United States, its governments can make decisions superseding trade agreements.

• (1030)

I ask the member how our amendment would sit and whether we need to go further on the trade agreements to have a public interest clause for Canada as the United States does?

Mr. Bill Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, we do not think Canada should be a party to any international agreement that compels us to do things against our will, particularly when it comes to our freshwater resources. I think this is very clear.

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I too want to congratulate my colleague from Winnipeg—Transcona for introducing this motion today.

Perhaps by the end of the day we will look back at this being an historic occasion, when the Parliament of Canada for the first time in history says it considers water as unlike any other natural

resource in Canada and wants to give it a special priority that it has not given other natural resources.

It is fair to say that one of the major issues of conflict in the early part of the 21st century will be access to freshwater. We understand that Canada has a relatively unique role in this regard in that we are the world's largest reservoir of freshwater with 9% of the globe's volume. If we look at the almost 200 countries identified in the world today, only 3 have an adequate supply into the future of fresh potable water. Canada is one of those.

The issue is crucial for us. As my friend from Winnipeg—Transcona indicated, it is absolutely mandatory that we have a thoughtful and strategic water policy in place as soon as possible. Today we call on the Parliament of Canada to send a very clear message to those who would like to export bulk water from Canada into other jurisdictions as a business commodity. We are calling for an immediate moratorium on bulk water exports and we are asking for immediate legislation to protect Canada's water and to exert our sovereignty over this critical resource for the future.

We know to what extent nations will go to secure access to oil. We have seen wars over this issue in a variety of areas. Let us face it, water is a whole lot more valuable than oil even today where we take it in a rather cavalier way. Today a litre of water costs more than a litre of oil. Still we waste this resource more than any other country with one exception, the United States. It wastes more water than we do but we are second.

Some ask with all this water, why not sell it? We have sold every other resource. Foreign interests have access to every natural resource in Canada except one. As my friend indicated, why not make a stand as a country and say "This is it. We consider water to be unlike oil, coal, codfish, timber or wheat. This is a resource of life itself". We can go without eating for seven or eight weeks but we cannot go without drinking water for more than a handful of days. It is life itself. Today we have to say clearly that Canada has no excess water to export. There is no such thing as surplus water in an ecosystem. The life along a river's course and watershed is the product of both the high flows and the low flows. If you alter them you change the river.

Diverting water from a salmon river will mean traditional spawning grounds along the river bank will not flood. Taking water from the mouth of a river will deprive the estuary, one of the most productive biological areas on earth, of vital nutrients. Clearly water is not a resource like all others and requires special protection and special strategy in terms of how we are to use it in the future.

My friend has indicated there are many concerns. Being a country that holds 9% of the world's freshwater, it is crucial that we have a water policy in place as soon as possible.

Supply

• (1035)

I cannot imagine a single thoughtful person in this country saying that we should not do this and that we should not do it as quickly as we can.

Let us not lose sight of the fact that today could be the beginning of a movement down this crucial pathway to developing a strategic water strategy for our country into the 21st century. Passing a motion in the House does not necessarily accomplish that. The will has to be there as well. In 1989 the House unanimously passed a motion to eradicate child poverty by 2000. Unfortunately things have become a lot worse since then. We have a long way to go before we meet that goal.

Again, it is fair to say that we want to advance this cause. We want to ensure that water in our country is preserved for the use of future generations. Let us face it, if an American community becomes dependent on Canadian water we can imagine the reaction if in some future point we decide to cut it off. We can replace wood with products from another country or with some other building material. But we cannot replace anything with water. Water is a strategic resource. It is a crucial life giving resource.

When it comes to dealing with water Canada's reputation is anything but sterling. We have more water diversion projects than any other country on earth. We have 600 dams and 60 large diversion projects that transfer water between basins. Most of them are part of large hydroelectric projects. We have shown ourselves more willing to alter the life of rivers and lakes for commercial purposes. No other nation even comes close to us in that respect. As my friend from Winnipeg—Transcona indicated, when it comes to dealing, preserving and conserving freshwater in our country our track record is anything but sterling. Perhaps today is the beginning of a new era and a new trend to preserving and conserving Canada's water for the future.

In light of the fact that a number of people have referred to many of the international agreements we have signed, it is difficult to pass legislation that would protect Canadians, protect the Canadian environment, protect water resources and protect the health of Canadians. I refer back to the MMT issue of not long ago where in spite of the efforts of the elected representatives to preserve and save the health of Canadians by passing legislation banning MMT, the government backed off because of the pressure it felt was coming from the United States as a result of agreements that we had made.

I would like to propose an amendment to today's supply day motion:

Between the words "transfers" and "in", insert, "and should not be a party to any international agreement that compels us to export freshwater against our will".

The Deputy Speaker: The question is on the amendment.

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for my colleague.

He made reference to the trade agreements and moved an amendment to the motion which has to do with international agreements under which trade agreements would fall. He will know that the government has often said that when it comes to NAFTA water exports are not covered. Yet if not covered by NAFTA, and this is the position officially taken by the three governments involved, why is it so difficult to get the Canadian government to seek from these other governments an unambiguous memorandum of understanding having international legal standing equal to NAFTA which says so so that the matter can be cleared up once and for all?

• (1040)

In the absence of the Canadian government being willing to seek such an international memorandum, the suspicion lingers that somehow NAFTA does involve the bulk export of freshwater. Otherwise, why would the government be so reluctant to seek an unambiguous statement that it does not?

I wonder whether my colleague would like to comment on the Liberal reluctance to seek such a statement.

Mr. Nelson Riis: Mr. Speaker, I think it is fair to say that many in the legal field have argued that under agreements like the FTA and the North American Free Trade Agreement certain commodities were clearly excluded. Beer, logs and culture were named as exclusions and therefore, by implication, presumably everything else is left in. Bottled water was also mentioned.

It is clear that once water enters a container for sale it becomes a good, a commodity or a product. Whether that container is a vessel, a canal, a pipeline or whatever, the concern Canadians have is that we are not protected by the present wording of international agreements like NAFTA. I agree with my hon. friend that if the will is there by all countries then we should.

Let us face it, the northern part of Mexico, particularly in the Maquiladora zone where the big industrial belt is now developing as a result of NAFTA, and in the American southwest which is referred to as the sun belt where the large industries and populations are developing in the agricultural sectors, they are running out of water. It is clear that they are running out of freshwater. The wells and rivers are drying up and every conceivable ounce of that surface water is either being used or is locked up in legal agreements.

As those populations increase they are looking north to Canada as their obvious source to bail them out when the time comes, no pun intended. The issue of having as many cards in our hands as we can when the dealing begins is absolutely crucial.

Supply

While people will argue that we can pass legislation here banning exports and pass legislation in the provincial legislatures of the country or wherever else, that trade agreement between three sovereign nations takes priority over national, state, provincial or local jurisdictions.

We have to do whatever we can to ensure that freshwater is in adequate supply for future generations of Canadians and that is why this motion is before the House of Commons today.

Mr. Dick Proctor (Palliser, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in one of the comments from the other side there was concern about the export of water, sharing our resources with other parts of the world. I wonder if the member could reference the fact that this motion does deal with the bulk shipment of water abroad.

Mr. Nelson Riis: Mr. Speaker, I agree with my hon. colleague. We acknowledge that today there are a number of agreements sharing water between Canada and the United States on the small scale. I am thinking Coutts, Alberta and Sweet Grass, Montana and others across the country.

However, let us also acknowledge that the country that wastes more water than any other is the United States. Crops are being grown in parts where they should never be grown. Swimming pools are filled with water from one end of Los Angeles to the other. Green lawns are all over southern California. There is a car wash every third block.

The day is not far off before the United States runs out of water because it abuses it so much. It pollutes and misuses its water resources. We want to send a clear signal that we are not going to be an easy source of bailing it out.

Mr. Julian Reed (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to participate in this debate and certainly welcome the motion.

Some of the exchanges in the debate would lead me to put forward the thought that one of the reasons why previous governments have not taken the water issue seriously is a lack of knowledge or a lack of individual knowledge about the state of water in this country.

• (1045)

For instance, my colleague on this side suggested that Canada held 25% of the world's freshwater supply. Across the way the statement was 9% and in the notes I have information that it is 20%, so this is an indicator that the message is not clear.

What is clear is that water is a renewable resource. The water cycle replenishes our water supply on a continuing basis, but there is an old adage that you never miss the water till the well runs dry. This year in the province of Ontario the wells ran dry. There are wells that are still dry in Ontario. Farmers in the riding I serve are

having either to buy water for their cattle or are having to move their cattle to other farms which have wells that are supplying water.

This year is the worst drought in recorded weather history in the province of Ontario. That should give us an indicator that we must be very conscious and very careful about the way we treat water and the way we look at it.

Until the present time it has been very difficult to convince municipalities and engineers that create domestic water supply to conserve water. It has always been the business of searching out bulk quantities of water without regard for water conservation. Yet many techniques could be put into place not only to help us conserve our water but to raise the consciousness of Canadians about the necessity to protect our water.

The concerns of members are very well founded. This is a domestic and global priority. Canadians feel strongly that water should not be removed from our country in bulk form. There are global shortages at the present time. The location of water is paramount. There may be demands placed on Canada's water in the future.

For environmental considerations more than anything else we need to protect our watersheds and the health of the ecosystems. The government is acting now and has acted in the past on behalf of all Canadians to preserve what is one of our most precious resources.

An hon. member: Where is the legislation?

Mr. Julian Reed: Wait for it. Not only has it been federal policy since 1987 to oppose bulk removal of water by tanker, diversion or other interbasin transfer. Our provincial partners have or have been developing similar policies or legislation to protect our natural waters from commercialization beyond current usage. Canadians can be assured that Canada is not on the verge of a major water giveaway.

There are federal and provincial responsibilities for the preservation of water. I will try to spell out the differences between the two. The federal government has a particular responsibility for boundary waters and transboundary waters along the Canada and U.S. border. Extending back to the Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909 it is a responsibility that this government and many before it have taken very seriously, so much so that the government announced its intention—and my hon. friend raised this suggestion—to seek an agreement with the U.S. to make a reference to the International Joint Commission.

We have been consulting with provinces to ensure that our reference to the International Joint Commission will produce the kind of findings that will be useful to all governments. We are confident that the IJC will produce sound recommendations, as was the case with the 1977 reference on the Garrison diversion project,

Supply

with the 1985 reference on diversions and consumptive uses in the Great Lakes, and with the 1997 reference to the Red River flood. We will soon be in a position to announce the terms of reference to the IJC.

• (1050)

There are legitimate concerns about trade obligations. A handful of critics believe that through the North American Free Trade Agreement Canada has somehow ceded control of our water resources to multinational corporations. The member has called for immediate steps on the part of the government. I state categorically and for the record that water resource management in Canada is in no way subject to the whims of multinational corporations. Nor is it directed by NAFTA. Water is a public good.

There is nothing in NAFTA that would prevent Canada from taking steps to prohibit the commercialization of our water resources. These principles date back to the 1947 General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. They are not new. For the information of the hon. opposition member I refer to the 1993 joint statement of the governments of Canada, Mexico and the United States following NAFTA which reads as follows:

Unless water in any form has entered into commerce and become a good or product, it is not a good or product.

That may seem like an obvious truth, but it leads to the next part of the same sentence which states in reference to water which is not a good or product that it "is not covered by any trade agreement including the North American Free Trade Agreement". The statement goes on to affirm our sovereignty over water by stating:

And nothing in the NAFTA would oblige any NAFTA party to either exploit its water for commercial use, or to begin exporting water in any form.

Nothing forces us to export water particularly in bulk. That leads to the final explanation of the 1993 statement:

Water in its natural state in lakes, rivers, reservoirs, aquifers, water basins and the like is not a good or product, is not traded and, therefore, is not and never has been subject to the terms of any trade agreement.

Canada does not now take water from its natural state and package it in bulk form for sale. We do not support the commercialization of water in bulk for any reason.

We have chosen to put water in smaller quantities into bottles and to offer it for sale, but the total effect of such shipments is very small compared with the net effect of large scale removal. Consistent with these provisions we will shortly be announcing measures aimed at preventing water from being taken from its natural state and converted into a good. I hope all hon. members of the House will endorse that.

The provinces have a responsibility as well. We consulted with the provinces especially during the last half of last year. Under the Constitution provinces have the responsibility for water manage-

ment within their borders. Permits to draw large quantities of water for a reason from natural sources are provided by provincial authorities. Our provincial partners are opposed to interbasin transfers, so clearly the federal policy of 1987 was on the mark. They agreed the proper management of water resources is first and foremost an environmental issue.

Perhaps what we have learned most from these consultations with the provinces is that a collective approach to water protection by governments is needed now before too many mistakes are made.

We were impressed by the degree of consensus with the provinces that exists on these issues. Our measures will be built on established and comprehensive environmental principles and on the concerns of all provinces and territories, not just on the question of exports but on the overall management of our water resources.

• (1055)

Such an approach is prudent and justified. Not only must we work with the provinces and territories to develop this understanding. We must work with our closest international ally, the United States, with whom we share the Great Lakes, the largest freshwater resource in the world.

The Deputy Speaker: I regret to interrupt the hon. member but his time has expired. He might be able to summarize his remarks in questions and comments.

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has perhaps inadvertently made the case for why we are so concerned about the NAFTA.

I am not sure whether the statement issued in 1993 amounts to some kind of combination between a tautology and a catch-22. In any event it is not very reassuring when they say that water will not be treated as a good unless of course it is treated as a good, and it will be treated as a good if in any circumstance it becomes commercially exploitable.

That is precisely the point we are making. We do not want it to become commercially exploitable and, if it ever should, under the conditions of NAFTA there would then be no turning back. By the very act of commercially exploiting water in bulk we would be committing an irreversible act. From there on other partners to the agreement in NAFTA would be able to argue that it has become a good and is therefore now to be treated like any other commodity.

Our point is that what is wrong with NAFTA is not whether it is treated as a good but rather that should it come to be treated as a good it would come under the terms of the agreement.

What we want is an exemption stating that water is exempt whether it is in its natural state or whether it is being commercially

exploited. We do not want it to be commercially exploited, but we also think an agreement which states that should it ever become commercially exploited it is then to be treated like any other commodity is not a good agreement either. It does not seem to me that the hon. member gets that about NAFTA.

Mr. Julian Reed: Mr. Speaker, obviously there was a concern in 1993 about this whole question and about the interpretation of when water is a good and when it is not a good. To suggest an amendment is required in NAFTA is not on because there is nothing in NAFTA now that obliges any export of water.

Canadian would make a decision as to whether to declare water in bottles are a good or not a good. There is nothing in NAFTA that demands an amendment. I do not know how much clearer I can possibly make it. It is not there.

Yes, we are concerned about the future of water. Yes, the government is taking action on it. I am sure the hon. member will agree with the statement when it is made, which we hope will be very soon. The fact is that it is not part of NAFTA.

Mr. John Duncan (Vancouver Island North, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, in his speech the hon. member was talking about consultations with the provinces. He stated that the provinces have a consensus. They are opposed to interbasin transfers. He made no statement about whether they were opposed to bulk water exports.

Could the hon. member give us a clarification on where the provinces add up on that?

Mr. Julian Reed: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure I can make it much clearer than I have. The provinces to this point are opposed to interbasin transfers. We have so far arrived at a consensus among the provinces that they share our concern. I do not know how much further I can take the member on that.

• (1100)

Mr. Charlie Penson (Peace River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member about comments in the 1993 red book where the Liberal Party said that it would take the opportunity before signing the NAFTA to correct any flaws that existed in the original free trade agreement.

There are a number of Liberals who are currently sitting in this House who are on record as saying that one of those flaws was that Canada did not get protection over its water and that it would be part of the agreement.

Why did the Liberal government not take the opportunity to correct those flaws before it signed the agreement?

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Mr. Julian Reed: Mr. Speaker, I will clear up a couple of things, if I might. My hon. colleague asked about bulk water export and that is within the purview of the federal government. I should have known that off the top.

The fact is that in the NAFTA there is no provision. Yes, there was concern about it and the concern was very legitimate because we do not want there to be any export of bulk water. However, after examining the NAFTA we found that it was not there.

Mr. Bill Gilmour (Nanaimo—Alberni, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the House for the opportunity to address this motion.

The motion has been amended. The original motion reads, in part:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should, in co-operation with the provinces, place an immediate moratorium on the export of bulk freshwater shipments and inter-basin transfers and should introduce legislation to prohibit bulk freshwater exports and inter-basin transfers—

The amendment reads:

—and should not be a party to any international agreement that compels us to export freshwater against our will—

The original motion then continues:

—in order to assert Canada's sovereign right to protect, preserve and conserve our freshwater resources for future generations.

Clearly our water is of critical priority to all of us. It directly affects Canada's agricultural sector, regional economic development, rural infrastructure, sustainable development, our environment and potentially our economy.

Reform agrees with the basic principle of this motion. The issue here is sovereignty and we agree that this House needs to take action to protect and control our water. I believe that all sides of this House would not have any problem with that comment. However, how we deal with the problem I believe is the question of this debate.

This motion is only a temporary solution. It will not fix the problem that Canada is now faced with as a result of this Prime Minister's actions. A temporary moratorium on bulk water exports will buy this government some time to negotiate a solution, a permanent solution. That solution is an amendment to the NAFTA which explicitly excludes water from the NAFTA.

It is interesting to note that before the Liberals came to power, when the Mulroney government was negotiating the NAFTA, the Liberals opposed the NAFTA deal and voiced their concerns about protecting our water.

During the 1993 election campaign the Prime Minister promised that he would renegotiate the NAFTA to exclude bulk water from the deal.

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On November 19 the Prime Minister insisted "Water and the North America Free Trade Agreement do not mix. Water remains under the control of the Canadian government. I can guarantee that".

Here are more quotes from our present Prime Minister: "I will make sure it is like that. It is one of the elements I intend to discuss with President Clinton. I want Canada to maintain control over our own water. It is not for sale and if we want to sell, we will decide".

• (1105)

Clearly the Liberals are leaving the door open for water to be sold.

The Prime Minister said he had a message for President Bill Clinton, which was "I don't even dream that the NAFTA gives the United States unlimited access to Canadian water. That is because water and the North American Free Trade Agreement do not mix".

Those are nice quotes, but they simply do not reflect reality. The reason we are debating this motion today is because Canada does not have control over its water. That is a clear fact.

The Mulroney government insisted that the NAFTA applies only to exports of water in containers and not to large scale transfers or diversions which the government maintained was never even discussed during the NAFTA negotiations.

Clearly there has been a lot of misinformation and misunderstanding over this issue. Since the government came to power it has denied the fact that when the Prime Minister signed the NAFTA without renegotiating to specifically exempt water Canada lost its control.

The Conservatives failed in 1988 and the Liberals failed in 1993 to protect our water.

When I raised this issue in the House during the last parliament in my motion calling on this government to take steps to protect Canada's sovereignty over water, the government denied that our sovereignty had been compromised.

Here are some of the facts. My colleague, our international trade critic, will be speaking later to clarify some of the issues regarding the NAFTA and the free trade agreement.

The NAFTA implementation act states that nothing applies to water, except bottled water, and water is not excluded from the free trade agreement itself.

Article 309 of the NAFTA prohibits controls by Canada covering the sale or export of any goods destined for either the United States or Mexico.

The only specific permission that the NAFTA gives for export controls is for Canadian logs and unprocessed fish. This, in my mind, is the answer. Right now Canadian logs and unprocessed fish

are not in the NAFTA. They are exempt. If we add water to that list, that gives us the control that we are looking for. That is the solution.

It is also likely that if the government were to propose legislation to ban the export of bulk water, as proposed in the NDP motion, we could be challenged under the NAFTA. Our legislation could be shot down by a trade dispute panel as unacceptable interference in the free market.

This is a dicey point and it is the difficulty I have with the NDP motion. The motion proposes that by banning the export of bulk water the problem will be solved. That is not the problem. The problem is the sovereignty, ownership and control of our water, which the Liberals have failed to fix. If we fix that we do not need to worry about the rest. Provincial control of the resource will then handle the next issue.

In passing any law banning water exports Canada would define water as a commodity and it would trigger the national treatment provisions of the NAFTA. Trade experts say that Canada could face a challenge under international trade rules if we explicitly define water as a good by passing legislation banning its export.

The Minister of the Environment stated that she wants to ban water export through legislation. However the minister has publicly stated that the government does not know how it will do this, simply because by putting water in legislation it will become a commodity.

We often hear about the trilateral statement made by the Prime Minister, President Bush and the Mexicans that we have a side deal which protects our water. We do not. All that side deal says is that if we do not export bulk water, then it could be okay. However, as soon as we export it we cannot turn the tap off. That is all that side agreement was about. It had nothing to do with fixing the problem.

The only way for Canadians to regain control of their water is for the federal government to negotiate a side agreement to the NAFTA that specifically excludes bulk water from the agreement.

• (1110)

The situation is getting urgent. The U.S. is facing water shortages. There have been at least 13 proposals for large scale diversions of water from the Great Lakes to the U.S. Clearly the situation is quite volatile because we have read in the papers that companies such as Sun Belt of California, the Nova Group of Ontario and the McCurdy Group of Newfoundland are pushing to get permits. It is the job of this government to fix the problem, and the problem is getting control over our water.

As well, there are jurisdictional issues affected by this motion. The management and protection of water as a natural resource is constitutionally provincial. It is a provincial responsibility. The

only time the federal government gets into it is if it concerns trade. Any legislation that the House is prepared to bring in clearly has to have the agreement of all the provinces. My understanding is that that agreement would not be forthcoming at the moment.

I call on the Liberal government to take concrete steps to protect sovereignty over our water. I call on the Prime Minister to negotiate a side deal that specifically exempts water from the NAFTA, as he promised in the 1993 election, as he has promised all along and as he has failed to do up to this point in time.

Mr. Dennis J. Mills (Broadview—Greenwood, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to begin by congratulating the New Democratic Party for this motion today.

My first campaign in Broadview—Greenwood was all about the free trade agreement. I can remember that about a week into the campaign I received a phone call from an associate of mine from Houston, Texas who was close to Clayton Yeutter who was the free trade negotiator for the United States. He said “Dennis, Clayton Yeutter spent his whole life studying water. In fact he did his doctoral thesis at the University of Nebraska and in 1961 published ‘North American Water Management’. You had better make sure that when you are going through this free trade agreement you understand exactly where water sits in the agreement because this is a man who has dedicated his entire life to water”.

I took the time to get a copy of Clayton Yeutter’s Ph.D. thesis from the University of Nebraska. I urge all members to get a copy of it. It is a 600 page thesis. If there was ever any doubt in members’ minds as to whether water was a part of the free trade agreement, this Ph.D. thesis will take that doubt away. It is a part of the free trade agreement.

In my very first speech in the House of Commons I begged former Prime Minister Mulroney to get a one page protocol letter from Ronald Reagan saying that water was exempt. The then government would not do it. I wrote several letters to Clayton Yeutter asking him to acknowledge that water was not a part of the free trade agreement. He never responded to those letters. I have them on file. I also know that in the last few days someone has talked to Clayton Yeutter and he will now publicly admit that water is in fact a part of the free trade agreement.

Canadians do not even have a proper inventory of what our water assets are. We waste a lot of water. Before we export a gallon of water we should take stock of what we have.

I would ask the member the following question, keeping in mind that we have not done an inventory of water in our country.

Let us imagine that we went through that exercise and discovered that we did have some excess water. If it were properly

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metered, priced accordingly and Canadians were looked after first, would the Reform Party member then consider the notion of selling? Again, I want to say that would only be after it was excluded from the free trade agreement. What would the member’s views be on sharing and selling of water only after we took the necessary time to take stock of it as an issue, province by province, region by region?

• (1115)

Mr. Bill Gilmour: Madam Speaker, the issue of inventory is clearly under provincial domain. The provinces own and regulate the water and it is for them to decide what they have and what they will do with it.

The member said he pleaded with former Prime Minister Mulroney to get water out of NAFTA. Has the member made the same plea to the current Prime Minister as he is now on the government side to make that happen? The issue we are debating today is to get control over our water. I would hope the member would approach his government to fix the problem. The member has identified the problem. Now it is up to the government to fix it.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Jocelyne Girard-Bujold (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, permit me to start with a quote from Plato. This Greek philosopher proved unequivocally the value we should place on this wealth, and I quote:

Water is the greatest element of nutrition . . . but is easily polluted. You cannot poison the soil, or the sun, or the air, which are the other elements of nutrition . . . or divert them or steal them; but all these things may very likely happen in regard to water, which must therefore be protected by law.

Water then has been of concern to humanity for thousands of years.

The Bloc Québécois cannot support the NDP’s motion. It means a significant step backward for the provinces in the area of responsibility for water, because the NDP is asking the federal government to intervene in two areas: to place a moratorium on the export of bulk fresh water and inter-basin transfers, and to introduce legislation to permanently ban fresh water exports and inter-basin transfers to affirm Canada’s sovereign right to protect, preserve and conserve its fresh water resources for generations to come.

We cannot agree with such a motion and such a procedure, which impinge on the rights of Quebec and the other provinces to legislate and manage their own water resources as they see fit. Once again, Quebec and the provinces of Canada are responsible for this resource and must remain so.

One thing is certain: this responsibility must be assumed by the provinces and they must legislate and manage this resource in

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co-operation with regional stakeholders, because it is they who are familiar with the problems and are close to the realities and consequences of good day-to-day management.

Section 109 of the Constitution Act, 1982, provides, and I quote:

Ownership of lands and natural resources rests with the provincial crown.

Quebec must protect this resource the best way it knows how.

In my remarks, I will show, with two examples from the Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean region, the importance and the absolute need to have those closest to the resource, such as our rivers, lakes and underground waters, manage them and be responsible for them.

• (1120)

Humanity's need for water has skyrocketed in the 20th century. In 50 years, the world's water consumption has increased more than fourfold. Meeting our need for water in the centuries to come is the challenge for which we must prepare. Each of the provinces therefore has a responsibility to manage this resource carefully, in co-operation with the public, for one thing is sure: it is a resource that will be highly prized in the future.

Just as an example, there are various approaches that the provinces could consider and where the federal government would be of no help: create structures, functions and responsibilities with a view to integrated management of water resources; recognize users of environmental water in order to get them more involved, and be able to identify minimum water requirements of aquatic ecosystems; develop exchanges of information and educational strategies in order to improve the dissemination of information, the results of pilot projects, best practices, case studies, and much more; develop environmental impact assessment procedures in order to improve the water resources management knowledge base; and, finally, encourage the public to get involved and give it additional responsibilities and a greater say in the planning and management of water resources.

The objective of all of these is to clearly illustrate the necessity for the provinces to be masters of their own water resource legislation.

Water belongs to everyone. It must be managed intelligently by the proper government levels. The Government of Quebec offers an excellent illustration, moreover, of responsibility in this connection. It has just announced broad public consultations on water management in Quebec, to be carried out by the Bureau des audiences publiques de l'environnement, a body which has unequivocally demonstrated its efficiency and its readiness to listen to public concerns. This body is one of the best examples of successful public consultation anywhere in the world.

Its purpose in carrying out consultations in all regions of Quebec encompasses four basic and fundamental orientations: improving

the quality of life for Quebeckers; responding to the social needs and individual aspirations of the people of Quebec; respecting environmental quality and the need for sustainable resources; and, finally, achieving the greatest possible equity.

Attaining this is possible only if four major objectives are given priority: ensuring that the health of the public is protected, since water is necessary to life, health and well-being; seeking the sustainability of the resource, since it is our duty to leave future generations with the water supply needed for their development; raising awareness of the resource on the social, environmental and economic levels; focussing on balancing uses, so that legitimate needs are met.

Promoting and raising awareness of water means also raising awareness of the great diversity of its uses and the conflicts that can ensue.

This set of objectives are a clear illustration of Quebec's desire to have its own water policy, one that reflects the concerns of the people of Quebec. This resource belongs to us, and we are fully in charge of deciding what we want to do with it.

As for the expectations of the Government of Quebec with respect to this consultation, to quote Minister of the Environment Paul Bégin: "Our bottom line is to define a water policy to serve the interests of Quebeckers, while at the same time ensuring the protection of a vital resource that is part of the heritage of humankind." This ultimate goal illustrates clearly Quebeckers' intention to determine the use of this resource according to the need for it.

• (1125)

In addition, the Quebec premier said in a speech that water management should be built on sustainable development, hence the need for careful and responsible management. This management must serve the public and its needs.

These statements and this consultation in Quebec on water will provide a clear picture for future Quebec water policy. The aim of the Government of Quebec is responsible management of this invaluable and vital resource.

I would like to quote remarks made by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Lloyd Axworthy, on February 4, 1998:

We now have to determine the most effective means and mechanisms for ensuring Canada can effectively manage its water resources. That includes the very active involvement of the provinces because within their own jurisdictions they have full authority over water resources.

The remarks by the minister are reassuring, given that not very long ago, the federal government, with its Bill C-14 on potable water, unacceptably meddled in provincial jurisdictions by setting up national standards on the quality of drinking water.

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It is clear, even for the federal government, that our resource should be protected under the aegis of each of the provinces, which are responsible for this resource.

[*English*]

Mr. Dennis J. Mills (Broadview—Greenwood, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I congratulate the member for Jonquière for her thoughts on this very important issue. I believe Quebec has done more on evaluating and studying the issue of water than any other province in Canada.

Over the years I have been amazed at the public service commitment to this issue and some of the creative ideas on pollution control and security of the resource, et cetera.

I believe passionately that the Government of Canada must speak for all of Canada. There is no doubt in my mind that we can have all the consultations in the world but let us look at the challenge we will face in time of the stabilization of the Great Lakes. Most experts on climatic control in this country will tell us that in time we will need to stabilize the Great Lakes.

We share those lakes with the United States. If we go through the exercise of stabilizing the Great Lakes, the Americans in my humble opinion would have to pay their share of that stabilization exercise.

My question for the member for Jonquière is whether she can see and support the notion that the Government of Canada must be the ultimate voice for a national water strategy and policy?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Jocelyne Girard-Bujold: Madam Speaker, before replying to the member opposite, I must say that I do not see the point of his comment. Right now, we are talking about drinking water, and which level of government has jurisdiction over that.

• (1130)

My response to the NDP proposal is to again refer to the Constitution of Canada, which says that:

Ownership of lands and natural resources rests with the provincial crown.

My authority is a constitutional document that says, beyond any doubt, that responsibility for the management of water resources rests with the provinces. This leaves the provinces free to develop a mechanism for managing the resources within their territory and ensuring that members of the public are truly protected and involved in decision making.

[*English*]

Mr. Rick Laliberte (Churchill River, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member to clarify the term riparian

rights. Dealing with the common law that has accumulated in Canada over a number of years, riparian rights have been misinterpreted as water rights. Riparian being derived from the French language, the member may have an insight into the difference between riparian rights and water rights.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Jocelyne Girard-Bujold: Pardon me, Madam Speaker, but I did not quite catch the beginning of the member's question. Could he please repeat it?

[*English*]

Mr. Rick Laliberte: Madam Speaker, when we are dealing with a national resource, such as water, which we deem to be of vital importance, our legal statutes and our legal history of common law have dealt with riparian rights but that does not deal with water rights. Riparian is more about the shore bed and property adjacent to water, but with respect to the actual body of water and the rights to that water, there is no legal history in this country.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Jocelyne Girard-Bujold: Madam Speaker, I can only repeat what I told the hon. member opposite.

From a constitutional point of view, the management of water resources is a provincial responsibility. It is up to them to pass legislation in line with what the public wants—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): I am sorry to interrupt the member, but her time is up.

[*English*]

Mr. John Herron (Fundy—Royal, PC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity this morning to speak to the NDP supply day motion which stipulates that the federal government act in co-operation with the provinces. I have to emphasize that very much. I want to pick up on what my learned colleague from Jonquière spoke about. It is imperative that the federal government recognize that there are jurisdictions with respect to water; they are provincial in nature rather than federal.

Having said that, the Progressive Conservative Party will support the intent of this motion that an immediate moratorium should be placed on the export of bulk freshwater shipments and interbasin transfers and that legislation should be introduced to actually do so.

Perhaps no country in the world lives off its natural resources more than Canada does. It is intrinsic on us to ensure that we have a viable environment for us to cultivate a number of the industries which actually make our economy work.

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I would like to bring a little bit of perspective to this debate. In January 1984 the Conservative government established an advisory committee to make recommendations for a federal government water policy. It was known as the Pearse commission. It reported in 1985 and formed the basis of the 1987 federal government document entitled "Federal Water Policy". The policy clearly stated that the federal government would not support the bulk export of freshwater, nor would it support the interbasin transfer of water for the purposes of export.

• (1135)

In 1988 amid growing fears from the public that water exports would be permitted under the FTA, the Conservative government introduced Bill C-156, the Canada water preservation act. This reiterated the same position taken in the federal water policy document. An election was called and the bill was dropped from the Order Paper. However, when parliament resumed, the Conservative government opted instead to amend the Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act to specifically exclude bulk water for the purposes of export from the agreement.

The debate resurfaced again during negotiations for NAFTA. Once again the government was forced to argue that the agreement would not compel Canadians to turn the tap on for their American neighbours. Michael Wilson, the former Minister of Industry and International Trade, said in this House on April 1, 1992 "Let me state categorically that there has not been under negotiation, nor will there be under negotiation, any provision for the large scale export of water".

Nonetheless to calm the reoccurring fears of Canadians, the government promised to introduce a side agreement at the time of ratification with the U.S. and Mexico that ensured Canadian sovereignty over domestic waters. Charles Langlois, the former Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry and International Trade, said the following in this House on February 4, 1993:

As for water exports, Canada's position is clearly stated in the federal water policy adopted in 1987. This policy forbids large scale water exports from Canada through the diversion of lake or river water. Furthermore, section 7 of the law implementing the FTA between Canada and the U.S. clearly states that the agreement does not apply to water, except for bottled water to be drunk or stored in reservoirs. This law has been in force since January 1, 1989. Similarly the NAFTA does not include large scale water exports: the law implementing NAFTA will have a clause confirming Canada's sovereignty over its water resources.

The new Liberal government received the credit for the signed commitment as it was in power when the deal with respect to this issue was ratified. The Liberals said in their red book promises back in 1993 that they would bring forth further accords with the Americans with respect to ensuring that Canadian sovereignty over water would be held true. However, they are in the sixth year of their mandate and they still have not brought forth any substantive legislation.

The NAFTA and the FTA ensured we did not ship bulk water transfers to the United States or any other country, but things have changed. The world's desire for water has increased so it is imperative that we take this to a new level now and bring forth legislation.

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the hon. member who made clear his party's intention with respect to the main motion. Unless I missed it, he did not say how his party feels about the amendment which states that Canada should not be a party to any international agreement which compels us to export freshwater in bulk form.

The member made an argument about NAFTA and the FTA which I might have expected from someone from the party that was the original architect of the FTA and NAFTA. I contend that his analysis of NAFTA is wrong and he is free to contend that it is right.

Should the hon member's analysis prove to be wrong over time, would he or would he not agree with the following which is contrary to his own analysis but not contrary to mine? If NAFTA proved to be an agreement whereby at some future date, after we had in some way commercialized the export of water and therefore subject to the terms of NAFTA were not able to put an end to that, should we no longer be a party to such an agreement?

• (1140)

Just to elaborate, under the investment provisions of NAFTA when the discussion here today has focused so far on whether or not NAFTA would prevent us from banning exports or putting a ban on exports after we had begun to commercially exploit our water resources for export, it might also be that the investor provisions of NAFTA would be a hindrance to the Canadian government acting. We already know that there is a company in British Columbia which is bringing an action against the Canadian government pursuant to NAFTA in the investor state provision because of a provincial ban.

There are a lot of reasons to believe that the member might be wrong on this. If time proved him wrong, would he be willing to support the kind of action we have recommended in our amendment?

Mr. John Herron: Madam Speaker, I do not think it would be in Canada's interest to belong to any kind of an accord where we would be compelled to sell anything that we did not really want to sell, that being bulk water.

With respect to NAFTA as it currently stands, I would like to quote the current Minister of Foreign Affairs when he stated in the House last week "The minister knows from past decades that the issue debated in this House is whether or not Canada is obliged under NAFTA to export water. Of course, it is not".

Supply

I would also like to refer to another position. Tom Hockin who was the minister of state for small business and tourism stated in this House on September 17, 1992 "Here are the provisions under NAFTA. As in the FTA, only water packaged as a beverage or in tanks is covered in NAFTA and water itself was not discussed during the NAFTA negotiations with the U.S. or Mexico".

If we engage in some kind of a trade dispute with the Americans or another country pertaining to water, should we step aside from the free trade agreement? I would think that would be very wrong for Canadians. I would like to point out to the member that if we have had any kind of record growth in this economy over the last number of years it has been largely due to our resource base and our export driven economy. Our trade with the Americans prior to free trade was about \$90 billion in 1988. Today it is well over \$240 billion.

Free trade has been very good for Canada. It has been very good for the growth of our economy. However, Canadians want to ensure that we maintain our environmental sovereignty including that of bulk water.

Mr. Dennis J. Mills (Broadview—Greenwood, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to suggest to the member for Fundy—Royal that the fact that Clayton Yeutter who was the free trade negotiator spent his entire life studying and planning North American water management should give us a heads up. Clayton Yeutter is now on the record as saying that water is a part of the free trade agreement, something he would not say 10 years ago.

It is very important that this House gets its head around this issue.

Mr. John Herron: Madam Speaker, if the hon. member and the government really were that concerned over this issue, they have had six years to bring forward legislation and that has not been done.

Mr. Rick Laliberte (Churchill River, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am very honoured to have an opportunity to speak on a very crucial issue, the debate on water.

The motion before us challenges the federal government to consider that the export of bulk freshwater could be a major detriment to this country's ecosystem and that the federal government act on this.

• (1145)

We have also seen a diminishing responsibility by the federal government by its transferring of responsibilities to the provinces. Water is fundamentally different from any other natural resource on earth. Without water life would cease to exist.

When we look at countries that are asking for our freshwater resource we must ask ourselves whether the unnatural transfer of water is enough to sustain everybody on the planet. Interbasin transfers would require water to be moved over tracts of land that historically may not have been bodies of water. We know that when hydro development floods areas the mercury contamination of that body of water is of vital concern. Environmental, ecosystem and human health concerns must be a large part of the debate.

When we look at Canada's freshwater on any geographical map or when we fly in small airplanes in northern Canada, we view Canada as an indefinite supply of freshwater. I believe hon. members would see through that mirage because that is all it is. The gift of water that has been given to us is very limited. We have to treasure it for our use and under the principles of sustainable development extend it for future generations. We must do this in a collective manner.

The motion also deals with Canada's sovereign right to water. Before any trade agreements are even considered or implicated in the issue of water our in house issue of sovereign right to jurisdiction over water must be addressed.

As I have had a wake-up call, I must remind the Chair that I am sharing my time with the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre.

I will give a lesson to the secretary of state by referring to Winnipeg. Winnipeg is a Cree term, Winnipek. It means dirty water. If we deem the sources of our water to be unclean, just imagine what we have done to the country and its sources of water with the impact of the industrial revolution on the continent.

An hon. member: The Winnipegization of North America.

Mr. Rick Laliberte: The Winnipegization of North America. I challenge the House to clearly define the jurisdiction of water in the country. When the country was negotiated under treaty with the aboriginal peoples the term and rights to water were not defined. Referring to the oral history of treaty negotiations, I will read a passage from a report called "Aski Puko" which means the land alone in which Daniel MacKenzie asked:

When the land was sold what exactly was sold? When the treaty obligations were made, was that just dry land or did that include the lakes and rivers of this country?

• (1150)

In the treaty there is no mention of water being transferred, negotiated or sold. The people mostly make their living from the water and also from the land. However in the treaty there is no mention of water.

The water was assumed as the lifeblood for all nations and all people. Ownership of water was assumed. It was assumed that everybody had access to it. When we discuss interbasin transfers,

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bulk export, the whole concept of the ecosystem and the impact, obligations under the treaty are in breach.

Let us look at our opportunities under sustainable development. Our challenge is to look after our environment and social and economic needs in an even manner. Water will play a major role in our future.

If we start transferring water to deserted areas such as the desertification of the southwest, climate disruptions are forecast by science. We have seen evidence of that. If we transfer water prematurely it may not address the needs of urban and growing populations to the south or the urban populations of countries that need our exports.

We have to look at how we can sustain our lives in this country. As more people move to Canada and find a home here they must have a place in which to live. We cannot recklessly abandon our water resources.

China will be the first country in the world to literally restructure its economy to respond to its water scarcity. Countries are making such changes. We see examples of cities collapsing in some countries because water is no longer usable. We also have a UN commission on sustainable development that found water usage growing at twice the rate of the population increase.

If we have an abundance of water in Canada we may be abusing the gift of water as we have it now. Jurisdiction is of vital importance. There are communities in northern Canada, most of which are aboriginal communities, that do not have running water or sewage treatment plants because the economic and commercial interests of those regions cannot afford it.

We have an opportunity to create clean, fresh water in the country. In terms of federal jurisdiction there was a major change in the early 1990s when Environment Canada started cutting budgets to deal with the science and research of water. We must revisit our federal obligations to the rightful use of fresh water, to our jurisdiction over water in dealing with our provincial, federal and aboriginal obligations. The Manitoba Natural Resources Transfer Act indicated in 1930 that traditional lands and waters for social and economic benefits must be considered.

All this debate about water is by no means complete today. It is an opportunity for us to review the federal jurisdiction over water and to put a moratorium on the export and interbasin transfer of water.

• (1155)

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to an issue that is very timely, very critical. I feel strongly about the issue.

Coming from the province of Manitoba, I would like to start my remarks by pointing out that I have some personal knowledge and background of how striking it can be when people get seized of the issue of moving water around on a grand scale in terms of moving water from one basin to another.

As a carpenter working on hydro projects, I personally witnessed the diversion of the Nelson, Churchill and Burntwood River systems to feed water to power hydro electric dams and the devastation that caused, certainly the flooding of the area, et cetera, they had to reclaim to create this great reservoir and the impact it had on aboriginal communities. I think of that first and foremost as we deal with this subject.

I want to share a story with the House because it points to the absolute fixation generations have had on moving water around in a grand scheme. Another reason I raise Manitoba as an example is that the current Premier of Manitoba is an engineer by trade. His engineering thesis was on an idea to use nuclear blasts to blow up the Red River Valley to divert the water from Lake Winnipeg and reverse its flow, as unbelievable as that sounds, to sell the water to the States.

This is recent history. We are talking the mid-1960s. People were seized with the issue. People in universities were playing with ideas that today sound almost comical. They are ridiculous. Serious people were dealing with the idea of moving our water around, never mind the impact on the environment or on future generations.

Contrary to what Brian Mulroney said in 1986, I believe Canada's water is not for sale. I believe our freshwater is a public trust and not a private commodity.

Last May the foreign affairs minister of the current government promised to take measures to protect Canadian water after a public outcry greeted the news that companies were on the brink of exporting bulk water to foreign markets. We were anxiously awaiting measures that might satisfy the fear of Canadians in this regard and nothing has been forthcoming. It is all the more timely that the NDP used its opposition motion today to raise this critical issue.

A drain on our freshwater is a drain on the public trust. This generation of Canadians has been charged with the responsibility to care for this precious commodity. I use that term not in the marketing aspect. It is a commodity, as the previous speaker pointed out, that is more precious than any dollar value we could possibly put on it, given the nature of the health implications of access to free water for any successful community.

Increasing water scarcity and the world-wide destruction of the health of the aquatic ecosystem are creating a global water crisis. It is not overstating it to point out that virtually every country of the world, especially the developing nations, are seized with the issue of access to freshwater as a primary concern.

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It is not only the developing nations. Obviously the main pressure on Canada is our partner to the south, our main trading partner, which has serious water problems. It should come as no surprise to us that the Americans are very interested in any idea that might help them to alleviate these problems.

The Colorado River runs dry before it hits the ocean. One of the great water systems of North America is being so taxed and resources are being siphoned out to such a degree that it no longer reaches the ocean. There is such a screaming demand as the population booms in California that the Americans are willing to entertain any idea no matter how ridiculous it may seem to Canadians to get access to something we have an adequate supply of at least currently.

When I lived in British Columbia I remember one of the ideas of Wacky Bennett, another premier under whom I have lived who had some questionable ideas about water. This was Wacky Senior, the original Wacky who wanted—this is wacky in itself—to flood the Skagit valley. He wanted to divert rivers to flood the Skagit Valley. Those members who have been to B.C. would know what a massive undertaking that would be, to divert huge river systems down that valley again into the United States and ultimately to the insatiable market of California.

● (1200)

These ideas keep springing up. This is what is truly worrisome to most Canadians. Often free marketers, often right wing governments, will do almost anything to make water a marketable commodity. It is very much a worry of ours when we heard the Minister of International Trade say: “Today’s water will be tomorrow’s oil”.

Any time we allow ourselves to think along those lines we are leaving ourselves open to the many people who would like to see water become a real trading commodity and would like to build it into free trade agreements, somehow have a default mechanism or some kind of tied selling mechanism. If we buy into the aspects of a trade agreement that we want and are interested in, we are also going to be tied into some aspect of having to share our water, maybe in a way far beyond whatever we wished or contemplated.

I would think the two examples I pointed out would be disastrous for the well-being of North Americans, using nuclear blasts to blast out the Red River Valley and divert Lake Winnipeg and then flood the Skagit Valley. Those are only two schemes. All throughout history we have been hearing these ideas, recent history certainly.

In 1959 there was an idea put forward by T.W. Kierans of Sudbury called the GRAND project, the great replenishment and northern development canal. His idea was that the rivers feeding

James Bay would be dammed up and a series of pumps would then lift the river flow upstream and over the great east-west divide and from there into the Great Lakes.

On that kind of massive restructuring, how could we contemplate being so arrogant as to use the technology that we now have to irreversibly change the flow of water, the great divide? Imagine the impact on the ecosystem. We talk about environmental impact studies. We have never thought of anything on that grand a scale.

In 1964 General McNaughton, chair of the Canadian section of the international joint commission, talked about the North American Water and Power Alliance plan, which again is to flood the Rocky Mountain trench.

Now we have people wanting to flood the Skagit Valley and flood the Rocky Mountain trench and turn it into a giant reservoir for North America, again to divert water to the U.S. and Mexico.

Is it any wonder with ideas like this being floated by credible people, by knowledgeable scientists of the era, Canadians are now forming alliances to try to protect ourselves from those very ideas?

As we speak today the Council of Canadians is in Ottawa speaking to this very issue, voicing its concern that water is to be the next marketable commodity and we are going to be somehow tied through free trade agreements to a relationship that we are not comfortable with and not ready for dealing with water.

Look at the way our free trade agreements tie us into heating fuel, for instance. There are clauses in the NAFTA and in the FTA that if we run short of heating fuel domestically, we are tied to selling at the same rate we are selling it currently to our partners to the south. We are very fearful of similar things coming along to do with water.

There are a few things we must keep in mind. There is a global water crisis. There are corporate water giants eager to use water as a for profit basis to serve the world’s needs and our government has not done anything to clearly state what our policy is to be on the international trade of bulk water or the diversion of water from one basin to another.

I hope this opposition day motion is dealt with favourably from all sides of the House. We can feel comfortable that as we form new trade alliances water will not be one of those marketable commodities that we would forfeit.

● (1205)

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I want to make a short comment to the member.

I am going back a few years, long before he was born I suspect. I was not very old myself but I can remember a certain situation

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regarding the state of Colorado, the state of New Mexico and the state of Texas with regard to the Rio Grande River which starts in the state of Colorado and flowed down through the other states supplying a much needed water source for both drinking and irrigation purposes, as these farm areas are reliant on water for irrigation.

Somewhere around the 1940s, I believe, the state of Colorado decided to build what it called a continental reservoir. It dammed up the Rio Grande River at its head in an effort to try to conserve much of the spring run-off and then distribute it over the year through some kind of agreement it tried to come up with.

I can remember during those years the emotions and how high they ran over water. I never saw a group of people more emotional, to the point where they were ready to take up arms and have range wars. They were willing to do anything over this supply of water.

I am thinking largely of tributaries that start in Canada and run through to the states. What extent does the member think this country should have over a natural resource such as water that flows to other areas of the world, particularly the United States? What kind of control should we have over that water situation? If he feels we should have strong controls, how do we enforce that without creating the emotional disturbance that I can guarantee it would cause through trying to control a water source?

Mr. Pat Martin: Madam Speaker, I think that is a very reasonable question and a good example.

I think there are relationships that have been developed dealing with water rights even within rural municipalities where one creek will run through one person's property and on to another. At no time is the property owner allowed to cut off the supply of water altogether to create a backwater, a slew or a lake on their own property, a reservoir of any kind.

There are water rights agreements that are negotiated. Right back to the Magna Carta there is reference to water rights I believe. I do not think anything in our motion deals specifically with that international flow of natural sources of water. We were more specifically talking about the bulk sale of water and the diversion from one basin to another to make water move in an unnatural way and force it into another basin.

To answer the member's question, which is very legitimate, I believe there are international water rights treaties currently in effect just as there are interprovincial treaties. The most relevant example I can think of is the Garrison diversion project in southern Manitoba which deals with farmers in North Dakota. The river actually dips across the international boundary many times as it snakes its way along the North Dakota-Manitoba border.

The farmers in North Dakota, worried about source, wanted to build the Garrison diversion project on the American side obviously which would nip off the flow back into Canada. That has been stopped by very rancorous negotiating between the provincial government and the state government.

I am comfortable that we have the wherewithal to negotiate the free movement of natural sources of water across international borders. Our motion does not specifically deal with that natural flow of water.

Ms. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Waterloo—Wellington.

Usually when I speak on the identity of Canadians I find myself speaking on our health care system. Today I am pleased that I am able to speak on what is truly our Canadian heritage which is clean lakes and rocky shores.

• (1210)

This discussion is a welcome response to the efforts begun by the federal government over the last year to review and update the 1987 federal water policy. Last summer we began a dialogue with all the provincial and territorial agencies with an interest in water management and on the development of a federal freshwater strategy. Provinces and territories indicated their interest in working with us on solutions to the full range of freshwater issues. Their involvement is important given their primary responsibility for water management in Canada.

The Government of Canada recognizes the priority that Canadians place on clean, productive and secure freshwater resources and ecosystems. It recognizes its responsibility to provide leadership. We believe that stewardship over waters is the responsibility not only of governments but of all Canadians. This dialogue in the House today advances participation, decision, commitment and action by all of us on the entire spectrum of concerns.

I would like to put the discussion on this topic in perspective in the context of our endowment of freshwater resources from coast to coast and the full range of issues which challenge us.

The proposed federal freshwater strategy will focus on issues where we can strengthen co-operation and ensure a more effective response to the challenges we share in the management of our inheritance. It will provide a snapshot of the state of freshwater in Canada, a review of the federal policy over the last 10 years and an overview of federal objectives, principles and strategies and a summary of issues and policy directions.

When the hon. member prepared this motion I am sure he was struck by the breadth, depth and complexities of the issues that define the scope of freshwater policy in Canada today. I hope we

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can all agree that the policy concerns that face us are much broader and pervasive than the single issue of bulk water exports.

In Canada we are in situation unique in the world. Our supply of water is abundant. In our rivers almost 10% of the world's renewable supply of water flows to the sea. Our lakes cover more than 7% of our land and our wetlands cover almost 15%. Our needs for water are many. Essential for all life, water is required for irrigating crops, supporting fish and wildlife, commercial fisheries, farm animals, recreation, tourism, transportation, manufacturing, for living in a city or at home. Most of our industry and population is located within that narrow band along our southern border. Most of our rivers flow north to the Arctic Ocean.

As a group, Canadians are not doing a very good job of managing our supply of water. At home each of us uses more than 300 litres a day, twice as much as the average European. But there is good news. Manufacturers are making steady progress toward more efficient use of water. In the steel, pulp and paper industries new technology, recycling and higher efficiencies are substantially cutting the amount of water used in production processes.

As elected officials, custodians of our natural resources, we must meet the challenges of conserving, enhancing and passing on to our children and grandchildren our great wealth in water resources. Some of the opposition today raised concerns about drinking water and sewage systems in our cities and towns. This is an issue that must be addressed in the full context of managing our waters. The provision of municipal water and sewer infrastructure is primarily the responsibility of provinces, territories and municipalities in Canada. They are facing significant challenges. Demand for water is increasing while water revenues have not kept up with maintenance costs. Canadians rank second in the world in their per capita water consumption and pay only half the costs of water supply. Over the next 10 years the costs of maintaining this infrastructure are estimated at \$40 billion to \$70 billion.

Federal water policy has been clear on this issue since 1987. We want to ensure that Canadians have ready access to safe, clean drinking water and to protect our freshwater systems from pollution for municipal sewage systems. We have also worked through the council of Canadian Environment ministers on a plan to encourage municipal water use efficiency.

One of the best ways we have to protect our water is to reduce the demand. Canadians must begin to take steps to conserve this precious resource. In recent years the federal government has contributed over \$700 million to water and sewer infrastructure improvements in Canadian communities.

In another area public attention is focused on atmospheric change. Human induced changes to the atmosphere including climate change, ozone depletion and pollution have the potential to profoundly affect the health and viability of ecosystems. Increasing concentrations of greenhouse gases may play a role in increased frequency of floods, tornados, severe storms and similar events.

• (1215)

These could cut down our supplies of clean, productive and secure freshwater sources in various parts of our country.

The government will continue to co-ordinate and conduct research on the impact of atmospheric change on our freshwater ecosystems. The federal government's commitment to research into our water resources is reflected in the science, impacts and adaptation component of the climate change action fund. This fund, which was created in the 1998 budget, commits \$50 million per year for the next three years.

Pollution is another important issue. Merely looking at the lakes and rivers in our country, let alone entering the water or drinking it, makes it obvious that pollution is a most urgent concern. Federal legislation in recent years, along with such programs as pollution prevention, a federal strategy for action, has achieved some success in preventing the growth of pollution.

Increasingly aggressive management of toxic substances has responded to Canadians' concerns about the protection of public health. The federal government is committed to having strong legislation and effective programs to protect human health from all forms of pollution, especially those that threaten safe drinking water.

The federal government is co-operating with provincial and territorial governments to advance the science of flood prediction and provide information and services for weather warnings to enhance our forecasting capabilities.

I have indicated the water context in which this motion should be considered. There are many aspects to federal freshwater policies and programs as urgent as bulk water exports.

Let me for a moment address the opposition's concern related to the interbasin transfers of water. The federal government, as clearly articulated in the 1987 federal water policy, does not support in principle interbasin transfers because of the potential impact on the social, economic and environmental integrity of our watersheds. Most provincial water management regimes also respect this principle.

Examples of impacts on interbasin transfers include the potential biotic transfer and contamination, the fragility of our ecosystems, particularly northern ecosystems which are very vulnerable to even small changes and recover slowly or not at all, the concerns of first nations whose ways of life are intimately tied to the cycles of abundance of water, depletion of water resources available to downstream communities and the loss of recreational and commercial benefits.

Again I congratulate the hon. member for initiating a dialogue in the House on this important issue. However, when we consider what legislation and regulation is required, it is vital that these

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encompass all the major issues. We must not approach legislation piecemeal.

We must work in co-operation and collaboration with provincial and territorial governments which have primary and direct responsibility for the water resources of this country.

This debate is timely. We can support those parts of the proposed motion that call for co-operative action with the provinces and territories and for a focus on the prohibition of interbasin transfers. The federal government continues to work with the provinces and territories to protect, preserve and conserve our freshwater resources for future generations.

We are applying a comprehensive approach that will examine the demands and environmental pressures on Canada's watersheds and water basins. We will be inviting interested Canadians to participate in the development of a federal freshwater strategy this spring. I look forward in the future to a debate on the full range of issues which comprise a proper federal freshwater strategy.

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys, NDP): Madam Speaker, the hon. member spoke about the context in which today's motion takes place, and I agree that it is a much larger context than simply the focus of the motion. She referred on a number of occasions to the co-operation required between the federal government and provincial and territorial governments.

Could she comment as to whether she sees any role at all for aboriginal people in this co-operation and consultation process? Would she agree that, in spite of what some have referred to as a renewable resource, water is not necessarily a renewable resource? If we upset the ecosystem or the drainage basin or whatever, we may find ourselves in a situation where it is no longer a renewable resource. I think of the Aral Sea situation.

Ms. Carolyn Bennett: Madam Speaker, this past summer being in Nunavut and recognizing the importance those people place on water and how important it is to their everyday lives and in terms of the international perspective they feel in terms of Canada's responsibility to make sure the world, the north and all the polar nations look after their water, I heartily agree with the hon. member.

• (1220)

I believe that consultation with the first nations is an extremely important part of this government's next step in terms of the consultation process and that they will be involved.

I think the hon. member is right. We must on a daily basis remind all Canadians that we cannot count on anything. We can ruin this resource and that we have to always be prudent caretakers

of our most precious resource and that calling it renewable, if we are not taking care, is indeed incorrect and foolhardy.

Mr. Lynn Myers (Waterloo—Wellington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an appropriate time for the House to discuss this motion regarding the issue of water exports.

I rise in support of the motion before the House today calling on the government to work in co-operation with the provinces to implement an immediate moratorium on the export bulk freshwater shipments and interbasin transfers and to implement legislation giving this moratorium greater force. I think that is very important.

Not only are Canadians very concerned about this vital resource, global demands for water are continually increasing and this trend is unlikely to stop in the near future. We must act now to ensure not only that domestic water resources are protected in times of future demand but that in times of plenty we maintain control of our water resources so as not to damage the ecosystems on which we all depend.

Several members have today mentioned the vital role which water plays in all our lives. This cannot be emphasized too much. We cannot live without water. That is obvious. It is a source of life not only for human beings but for plants and animals and the entirety of our complex ecosystems.

In many ways we are in a privileged position today with roughly 20% of the world's freshwater supplies falling within our borders. It would appear at first glance that we have little to worry about when it comes to protecting our water from commercialization by domestic and foreign investors. After all, since we have so much of it, it seems reasonable to suggest we might sell some of it off to increase our tax base or give it away to those in need.

Perhaps it appears too reasonable. In reality it is simply not that simple. With privilege comes responsibility. While we all understand in the most basic terms how water contributes to our daily lives, to agriculture and to industry, we do not understand the full extent to which water fuels each and every mechanism of life. If we abuse our privilege we may neglect our responsibility.

We have so much water in so many different forms, frozen, in marshlands and some of the world's largest lakes and underground. These different forms are interconnected but we do not fully appreciate how. We cannot afford then to permit actions, the consequences of which are uncertain. The cumulative impact of numerous withdrawals of water, whether for export or not, is a serious concern to all Canadians.

In a 1985 study the international joint commission repeatedly highlighted this issue in particular with respect to the Great Lakes. Individual export projects of apparently minor effect could create pressure to open the Great Lakes and other bodies of water to other

commercial initiatives. To be certain the consequences are unpredictable.

[*Translation*]

We have a duty to protect our water. We have a duty to continue to develop advanced water management and conservation techniques, since the world's water resources are heading toward exhaustion and other countries are looking to Canada for leadership.

[*English*]

We can best fulfil our future role in this regard by taking actions now to protect our water for future generations. While there may be debate among members present on how best to prohibit future bulk water removal projects, whether for export or not, it is important that any public dialogue on this crucial issue be undertaken from a position of truthfulness.

How can I be clearer? Canada is not on the verge of opening the floodgates.

• (1225)

The first reason is grounded in simple economics. No removal of water in bulk export from Canada now occurs because at present the bulk export of water is not economically viable. Shipping by tanker, pipeline or other means is prohibitively expensive due to the high costs of shipping, infrastructure and the low present value of the product. Entrepreneurs continue to explore and propose export initiatives but the likelihood of a profitable venture is remote. For those few exceptions that do occur, none is undertaken for commercial purposes. They are limited to the sharing of treated water with a few neighbouring U.S. communities and a few instances of the trucking of small quantities and volumes of groundwater to the United States.

We do not expect a water export boom now or in the near future. Without the immediate threat of a water export boom or even a mild flow it is essential that we approach this very complex issue from a position of responsibility, bearing in mind that the global need for water could rise dramatically one day. We must take steps now to ensure the protection of the health of our environment for future generations. We must not be lured by the idea of quick votes or band-aid solutions.

The comprehensive approach that recognizes shared responsibilities for water management is exactly what is needed. We must work with our provincial and territorial partners and others to develop an all round strategy that gets it right the first time. We must ensure that in moving to stop bulk exports of water we do not mistakenly infringe upon existing uses of water, for example the case of the bottled water industry.

Value added products like bottled spring water are profitable exports. There is little evidence available to suggest that small

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scale removals can be justifiably prohibited on environmental grounds. Export trade in bottled water amounts to 240 million litres annually at a value of approximately \$173 million.

A few moments ago I mentioned a second reason why Canadians should not be unduly alarmed by the threat of multinational corporations thirstily waiting to suck our lakes dry. Thanks in large part to the Canadian Constitution the provinces have embraced their responsibilities for water management. The federal government has responsibilities for boundary waters under the boundary waters treaty of 1909. Provinces have responsibility for water within their boundaries.

Through its consultations this past summer and fall, the federal government discussed with the provinces the growing network of policies, regulation and legislation in place or that soon will be implemented to prohibit the interbasin transfer and removal of water in bulk from within provincial boundaries. Six of ten provinces are pursuing or have formal legislation, regulations or policy dealing with exports or bulk removal from watersheds. For example, in western Canada British Columbia's water protection act prohibits the removal of water from the province except in containers of 20 litres or less in existing tanker truck shipments.

Alberta's 1996 water act amendment came into force with the promulgation of regulations on January 1, 1999. It prohibits the export of untreated water with special legislative approval. Manitoba opposes interbasin water transfers. Saskatchewan recently announced that it will continue to introduce legislation regarding the removal of water from its watersheds. Ontario has a new policy prohibiting the transfer of service water out of Ontario water basins, including the Great Lakes. It has recently announced its intention to implement regulations to give this policy greater force. Quebec is conducting a public review of provincial water policy at this time. Nova Scotia will soon release a water resource management strategy.

We have every reason to believe the provinces will address the issue of water export. We know that will happen in the very near future. These many legislative mechanisms are already in place or are in the works. It seems clear that the support of today's motion will extend well beyond the confines of this House which is important to note. I look forward to the results of today's vote so we can move forward quickly on this very important matter. There is much work to be done in this area and I look forward to it.

Mr. Charlie Penson (Peace River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to take part in the debate on the NDP supply day motion. The broad thrust of the motion is essentially to protect Canadian sovereignty over our water. While I take issue with the way the NDP may want to achieve that, no Canadian would probably disagree with the objective that Canadians need to have control over our water. We need to decide what we will do with it and Canadians have to come first in that equation.

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• (1230)

It has been a longstanding Reform policy that we support the idea that Canadians have sovereignty over their water supply. We indicated that we would have liked to have had the Canada-U.S. free trade agreement and the subsequent NAFTA amended to reflect that position. Unfortunately that was not done, and we have to ask why.

In 1988 when the Conservative government negotiated the free trade agreement with the United States water was not dealt with. Essentially the result of that left some concern as to whether water was on the table. There was a great deal of debate as to whether water was subject to the free trade agreement between Canada and the United States.

Leading up to the negotiations for the NAFTA there was a lot of debate and an opportunity to correct any misinterpretation that might have existed under the free trade agreement itself.

The current Prime Minister was on record on several occasions stating that water would not be on the table in any agreement that he signed. The Liberal red book said that the NAFTA was an opportunity to correct any flaws that existed within the free trade agreement with the United States. Some of the comments made by the Prime Minister at the time suggested that this was a flaw, that water was not properly protected.

I will quote a couple of his comments to verify what I am talking about. On November 19, 1993 the Prime Minister said:

Water and the North American Free Trade Agreement do not mix. Water remains under the control of the Canadian government. I can guarantee that.

I doubt that is the case and I will explain why in just a moment.

A few days prior to that he said:

I will not allow any large water exports to take place as long as I am Prime Minister. Nor will I sign any international bilateral trade agreements that obligate Canada to export water.

Let us examine for a moment what in fact he got. When the NAFTA was negotiated the Liberal government said it would not sign it unless there was a labour and environmental agreement within the main body of the NAFTA. Presumably from his comments the Prime Minister was going to make the case that he would not sign the NAFTA unless he also received a specific exemption for our water.

He got exemptions for raw logs and unprocessed fish, but somehow a provision concerning bulk freshwater exports was not included. What he got was a side agreement that was not adequate. It does not in any way address the concern because it is an appendix. It is not a part of the agreement itself.

The side agreement states:

The NAFTA creates no rights to the natural water resources of any Party to the Agreement. Unless water, in any form, has entered into commerce and becomes a good or product, it is not covered by the provisions of any trade agreement, including the NAFTA. And nothing in the NAFTA would oblige any NAFTA Party to either exploit its water for commercial use, or to begin exporting water in any form.

The essential portion of the side agreement states "Unless water, in any form, has entered into commerce and become a good or product. . .".

What does that mean? When could the United States or Mexico ask for Canadian water? As we are aware, water comes under provincial jurisdiction. Presumably any province could say that it wanted to export water, but I do not think that would happen. But that is not enough to cover it.

• (1235)

Water only has to come into commerce. It can be done domestically between companies in Canada. Then we could not say that American or Mexican companies do not have access to a particular body of water.

The Prime Minister blew it. He said he was going to protect Canadian sovereignty over freshwater, but he did not achieve that. He got a side agreement which essentially says that when bulk water comes into commerce, even domestically in Canada, then under the provisions of the NAFTA and the free trade agreement before it all parties have access to that particular body of water.

Let us examine how that could take place. There have been several proposals put forward by the provinces to have that come into effect. If one province decided that it was going to drain a lake and sell the water to a Canadian company, that is all it would take to trigger the mechanism. Then, under the non-discrimination aspects of the NAFTA, that province could not deny access to an American or Mexican company.

That may not be a bad thing, but let us not try to fool the public. We do not have sovereignty or control over our water as a result of the agreement signed by Canada, Mexico and the United States. It simply does not exist. The only way that we can stop the export of water is to work co-operatively with the provinces to build the awareness that if water from a particular source comes into commerce other companies will have access to it.

It is important to support the NDP motion because we want to ensure that Canada maintains control of its water. We need to set the agenda and that is one way we could do it. The provinces do not have to give a licence to any particular company to build a domestic industry on water exports. The provinces have the right to say yes or no, just the way they do when they give access to forest products. In forest management areas in Alberta or British Columbia the provincial governments have the right to say "You have access to a certain amount of trees in this forest management area".

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However, the provinces do not have the right to deny access to an American or Mexican company if a Canadian company has access.

We have to be careful of that provision. Let us not try to fool people. That is the only way that control over our water can actually take place.

I am not sure what the Minister of the Environment envisions in the legislation which she will be introducing in a couple of weeks, but it appears that provincial-federal co-operation is necessary if we are to maintain control.

It is important that Canadians maintain control over their water. What we decide to do with it has to be our agenda. I am not suggesting that at some point down the road Canadians may decide there needs to be some sale of water, but I do not think that is the case now.

This is a very emotional issue. Bottled water is sold on a commercial basis. Then there is the other extreme, that of the interbasin transfer of water which scares the heck out of people. I farm in Alberta. I know what can happen when people change water routes. It is a very emotional issue.

It is very important that we give serious thought to the NDP motion which is before us today. We will be supporting the main motion and we encourage others to do so to try to bring some sense and reason to the whole idea that we need to have federal-provincial co-operation in order to have control over our Canadian waters.

Mr. Rick Laliberte (Churchill River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the jurisdiction of water was a major aspect of the hon. member's debate. I had raised in a previous speech jurisdiction over aboriginal rights to water. Maybe he would like to share his views on that.

• (1240)

The motion states "the government should, in co-operation with the provinces", but there seems to be unfinished business with the treaty obligations that were made during the acquisition of this country and the rights to resources.

Water is a major concern, along with a lot of the aboriginal rights that have been discussed recently.

Mr. Charlie Penson: Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding that under the Canadian Constitution water is a natural resource that is under provincial jurisdiction.

If there are concerns in the area that my hon. friend is talking about, those concerns need to be discussed at the provincial level to see if some kind of an agreement or arrangement can be worked out.

Mr. Rick Laliberte: Mr. Speaker, another situation concerning jurisdiction is the issue of Canadian sovereign rights over the freshwater resources of this country.

What is the member's view on the privatization of some of the water sources in this country, either drawn from wells or aquifers, at municipal sites? I know that everybody has assumed that municipal and local governments have jurisdiction over and manage water, but there have been recent developments in some provinces which have privatized water and sanitary services.

What is his view toward this evolution of privatizing those sources of water, which inevitably might be a concern for freshwater as well?

Mr. Charlie Penson: Mr. Speaker, I am very familiar with the whole aspect of water in terms of groundwater sources available to Canadian residents as a primary water supply. It is a very important issue.

In Peace River a lot of our neighbours farm. We have an oil industry that also uses freshwater from aquifers to recover more oil from the fields.

It is a very important issue that has just been raised. We have to make sure that we protect the water supply for residential use as a primary responsibility because there are other sources of water available to industry.

Saltwater aquifers can also be used to flood those oil formations. They do not have to use freshwater. It is a concern that I have.

A number of people in the area that I live have water wells which are either drying up or levels which are going down. That has probably been happening because the industry has been pumping for something like 100 years. I do not think the industry in that case should have the right to our aquifers of freshwater that have taken in some cases hundreds of years to develop into the quality of water that we have now.

We have to be very careful in allowing industry to use potable water. It is a precious resource that takes time to develop. It seems to me that industry should be allowed to use water in these endeavours, but it should have to use water that is not potable and does not compete with residential usage in Canada.

Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today to speak to the issue of control over our water.

I come from an area that was initially explored by Palliser, who went back to the old country and said "It is uninhabitable. People cannot live there". However, we do live here and we have turned it into a garden of Eden where we grow specialty crops.

• (1245)

We have created cities, towns and villages in the area. We have a strong diverse agricultural base and it is all because of water irrigation.

My constituency is also unique because the Oldman River flows through the city of Lethbridge and eventually flows through

Supply

Medicine Hat goes east and north and ends up in Hudson Bay. The Milk River in the south end of my constituency flows south and eventually flows into the Gulf of Mexico.

Water is a diverse, strange and important part of our lives. Actually water is the backbone of our life. It is our most important natural resource. It is not a resource like any other; it is unique because without it, we cannot live. We could learn to live without coal. We could learn to live without wood and we could probably learn to live without precious metals. Technology today has enabled us to become less dependent on raw natural resources but it has not enabled us to live without water.

Although every Canadian household pays for water every month on their utility bill, it is impossible to put a price on the value of freshwater to people, plants, animals and ecosystems.

In Canada especially, water has a certain mystique. It has the power to evoke strong emotions in the hearts and minds of Canadians. It is no wonder then that when it is threatened, it provokes powerful emotions. Today we are here to discuss the root cause of these strong emotions. We are here to discuss the future of our most precious resource, a resource that is being threatened.

My NDP colleagues have introduced a motion that would immediately act to protect Canada's control over its water. The motion with the amendment reads:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should, in co-operation with the provinces, place an immediate moratorium on the export of bulk freshwater shipments and interbasin transfers and should introduce legislation to prohibit bulk freshwater exports and interbasin transfers and should not be a party to any international agreement that would compel us to export water against our will, in order to assert Canada's sovereign right to protect, preserve and conserve our freshwater resources for future generations.

Although I am glad that we are finally being given the opportunity to discuss this issue in the House, I am sorry it has taken so long. The Liberal government has promised time and time again that it would introduce legislation that would protect our water. Still there is nothing.

In 1993 the present Prime Minister promised that he would obtain a special exemption for water under NAFTA. Exemptions were already obtained by Canada's negotiators for raw logs, cultural industries and some fish products.

In November 1993 our Prime Minister assured Canadians that our water was not for sale. He said "Water is not in NAFTA. Water remains under the control of the Canadian government. I want Canada to maintain control over our own water. It is not for sale. And if we want to sell it, we will decide".

Of course, we know all too well that NAFTA was signed into effect without exempting water. The problem was that water was never discussed in the appropriate fashion. It was never given the

weight of importance it needed to have in those discussions, the importance that it has to Canadians.

In March 1996 the member for Kamloops introduced a bill that would prohibit the export of water by interbasin transfers. It was during debate on that bill that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for International Cooperation assured the House that the Liberal government was consulting Canadians, that his government was currently conducting a review of its programs and legislation relating to sustaining Canada's water resources. He promised that through this review a comprehensive approach to water could be developed, including legislative measures to address water export. This debate ended several years ago, and we have not seen a single line of legislation that would protect Canada's sovereignty over its water.

On May 15, 1998 the member for Davenport asked the Minister of the Environment if she had plans to introduce legislation to ban the export of bulk freshwater. The member was assured that he had nothing to worry about because the introduction of legislation respecting our water was a priority for her government.

Again in October when the government was asked about a national water policy, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs assured the House that water was of prime importance to the country and that his government would be laying out a comprehensive strategy on the issue in the fall. I have not seen any comprehensive strategies laid out by this government since the fall, let alone one on the protection of our most valuable resource, freshwater.

● (1250)

As time goes on, the issue of freshwater and its control becomes more and more important. We have seen in recent times some actions by foreign countries in regard to our water.

Time and again this Liberal government has failed to protect the interests of Canadians. I am concerned about the future of our freshwater resources. We all know that Canada has the world's largest reserves of freshwater, possessing 25% of the world's supply and 9% of the world's renewable freshwater. I would like to give some scenarios and examples of what has happened in the world and some of the things that have been proposed for our water.

In the last century many of the wars fought across the world were fought over oil. Oil was always considered our most precious resource. It was worth more than its weight in gold. During the 1970s oil crisis our economies were almost shut down because they were denied access to cheap oil.

We have here a resource far more valuable than oil. We have a freshwater resource. It is estimated that the world's consumption of freshwater is doubling every 20 years. By 2025 almost two-

thirds of the world's population will be facing restricted water supplies.

The U.S. is the world's largest per capita user of water. Much of the pressure to export our water has come from the Americans. Because of this, some scenarios have taken place in the past. One scenario which has been looked at is the North American water and power agreement, an agreement that would divert the headwaters of the Yukon, Skeena, Peace, Columbia and Fraser rivers for storage in a huge Rocky Mountain trench before it would be diverted to the thirsty American south. The Grand Canal was another massive engineering project that would divert Canadian rivers to feed American industry. I might also add that a member of the Liberal government has recently called for studies to re-examine the feasibility of some of these plans.

As populations shift and move and as droughts intensify, more and more water becomes the topic of discussion. The point I want to make with these examples is that it is more critical now than ever before in Canada's history to protect the power to manage our freshwater resources in the best interests of Canadians. We need a comprehensive water policy, one that has been negotiated with the provinces to ensure the control over our water stays in the hands of Canada and the Canadian people.

The provinces were given control over their natural resources under our Constitution. The federal government is responsible for international trade. It is crucial therefore that this government move immediately to enter into discussions with the provinces to establish a clear and comprehensive policy.

The Reform Party supports the protection of Canada's sovereignty over its water and waterways. It recognizes Canada's unique position as a steward of freshwater resources and the need to protect the quality of our water as an inherent part of our national heritage to maintain biodiversity, to protect health and safety, to support the quality of life for Canadians and to facilitate responsible economic development. It is unfortunate that this government does not share those views.

It is true that water is not specifically mentioned in NAFTA. We allow the export of bottled water. However it is still recognized through a side agreement that water in its natural state in the lakes and rivers of our country is not considered a good. There is concern among trade experts that this side agreement does not go far enough. My colleague from Peace River mentioned earlier that we must open NAFTA through a trilateral discussion and demand that water be given an exemption similar to the exemption that is given to some other natural resources.

The government, in fact the Prime Minister promised to all Canadians that he would protect Canada's water. He guaranteed

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that water would remain under the control of the Canadian government to be managed in the best interests of Canadians. He has not done that. He has not reopened NAFTA and he has not obtained an exemption for freshwater. In short, he has not adequately protected Canada's freshwater resources. This failure to enact legislation has led to chaos and confusion, and as we have seen, some challenges to our sovereignty not to mention hundreds of millions of dollars in lawsuits.

It is time for this government to act immediately to protect Canada's freshwater resources. The time for talking has passed.

Mr. Rick Laliberte: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is certainly creating a challenge of the jurisdiction of water and for the federal government to act.

• (1255)

I wanted to highlight for the record and for the knowledge of the hon. member that the legal status of Canadian water law seems to encompass riparian rights under common law that there is no right to ownership of water found in its natural state. The underlying policy to this rule is that the public at large has a right to reasonable use of water, in such cases as fishing and navigation.

It is only when water is contained or controlled by someone that the characterization of personal property can apply. Examples would be swimming pools and bottled water and that personal property can now be sold. In its natural state under our law, nothing is said on the ownership of water.

We can look at surface water and surface bodies. We know that rivers flow and lake bodies hold the water that flows into them. But the underwater, the aquifers, is a situation where owners of land not adjacent to water have no common right to the water. But when groundwater is governed by the rule of capture, an owner of land can take as much subterranean water as he can capture. That is a question of our law.

When we use the legal term capture, does that mean it is contained or controlled? That is a major concern of the privatization and potential purchase of our water resources, either they are subterranean, underground, or surface. That is the uneasy journey we are taking as Canadians here.

Unless the federal government acts and clarifies these jurisdictions, responsibilities and rights, we are going into the millennium with uncharted water so to speak, because we are not protecting it for future generations of Canadians.

I think the challenge is to deal with that now.

Mr. Rick Casson: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for Churchill River for his question. We spend a lot of time together on the environment committee and I appreciate his concern and his background in environmental issues and certainly

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in aboriginal issues and how they pertain to the environment. Some of the member's revelations have been very revealing to us in how our native people look at the environment and how it interacts with their lives. Certainly the member's comments are what we are here for today.

We have a resource that is important; it means life to everything. Without properly managing this resource many scenarios and different laws come into effect. Some people think that after building a dam, the lake behind that dam is a container. Once that is done, is that water in a container? Is it then treated differently? Aquifers are treated differently.

Certainly we have to take the time and the government has to take the time to sit down with the provinces and work this issue out. We have called for it. It has not been done. The fact that it has not been done has added to the confusion, has added to the concern of Canadians. Canadians want control over their water. Plain and simple. Overwhelmingly. Very few issues can stir up emotions as discussions of water can.

Over the 20 years of my involvement with municipal politics, clean water and a source of water to feed the citizens of our communities has been on the top of the list for every municipality in this country. To ensure that we have the sovereignty over that, we have to get this government on the road to developing that policy.

Mr. John Duncan (Vancouver Island North, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, as my colleague mentioned, water is quite an emotional issue with most Canadians. We have great sensitivity to our reputation that we are hewers of wood and drawers of water.

Under the NAFTA agreement, unprocessed logs are an exemption. Would it not be most appropriate if water also fit under that same category?

• (1300)

I think that was addressed in the speech but I want to carry it a bit further. A contradiction in view has become apparent this morning, that is the role of the federal and provincial governments in terms of the whole question of bulk water exports. The parliamentary secretary said that this was federal jurisdiction. We certainly have outstanding permits in Canada to this day where provinces have actually issued bulk freshwater export licences.

Would my colleague like to comment on the role of the provinces from his perspective?

Mr. Rick Casson: Mr. Speaker, my home province of Alberta recently passed a water act to control water and to deal with the issues we have come up with. When it comes down to it, the fact that parliamentary secretary has said it is a federal issue, it is not.

The provinces have to be involved from the start to put the policy together.

Mr. Andrew Telegdi (Kitchener—Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is no question water is one of the more important topics we will be discussing in the future. There is a real perception of that now. The hon. member was talking in particular about groundwater.

In terms of the world's freshwater supply, water in the ground in aquifers, which are basically slow moving rivers, accounts for over 90% of the freshwater on the planet. Many people think it is the lakes, rivers and glaciers, but the reality is that 90% is through the aquifers which are connected to lakes and rivers by the hydrological cycle.

One very important issue is who is exactly responsible for what. Certainly in the province of Ontario it is the provincial government that gives permits for the drawing of water. On the Great Lakes we have international treaties, but the fact of the matter is that a watershed is under provincial control. It also passes to federal control and across the border because, as I said before, aquifers are slow moving rivers.

This takes me to another point which is a very important part of the debate. We need to be vigilant in protecting the aquifers. There are many examples where very good quality potable water in aquifers becomes contaminated and is lost for many decades until there is some way of taking remedial action.

I will put a question to the member from the Reform Party in terms of the debate on water. He mentioned municipal governments, provincial governments and the federal government. Would the member agree that we virtually need a high powered conference on this matter to set—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The time has expired for questions. On a brief response, the hon. member for Lethbridge.

Mr. Rick Casson: Mr. Speaker, certainly discussions should take place at a very high level, the highest level possible because of the importance of the issue.

• (1305)

Hon. Charles Caccia (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it seems to me only fair to say at this point in the debate that there seems to be fairly unanimous consent and support for the motion today, particularly on the part of those who believe in a role by the Government of Canada in protecting the interest of Canadians in all provinces.

There seems to be, however, some confusion in connection with the alleged link between water and NAFTA. Some speakers who preceded me seemed to labour under the impression that water is in the NAFTA. It might be desirable therefore to dispel this notion once and for all because it only damages Canada's position vis-à-vis the United States and the NAFTA partners.

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There is no reference to water in NAFTA except for bottled water. The sooner we put our thinking to rest on this matter the better, so that we do not raise in the House the notion that water is in the NAFTA. It is only in the form of bottled water. Anyone who can read and takes the trouble to read that portion of the NAFTA will see for himself or herself that is the extent to which water is mentioned in that agreement.

Therefore any debate on the motion which brings in through the back door the impression that we have to deal with the NAFTA only tends in the long term, and even in the short term, for that matter, to weaken Canada's position because certainly what is said in parliament has a certain weight.

The motion, which is highly laudable, puts the emphasis on matters related to trade and that is where the pressures are coming from at the present time. It is refreshing, however, to read what the British Columbia Wildlife Federation wrote some 15 years ago as quoted in the report entitled "Currents of Change", the final report of the inquiry on federal water policy, a commission launched under the Trudeau government in 1983. It says:

The issue is much broader than the consideration of habitat for fish, more than irrigation or energy development, more than jobs or recreation. It is fundamental to the overall human condition.

This is how water is described. It is important to amplify the point of the B.C. Wildlife Federation because it is so well put.

There is also the issue of how Canadians relate to water. We have heard some very passionate interventions this morning on this subject and I would like to add one from the "Currents of Change" report on page 130 where it reads:

Water evokes special feelings among Canadians. On the surface it appears unreasonable to object to exporting a renewable resource like water while supporting exports of non-renewable resources like minerals, coal and natural gas. The explanation lies, at least in part, in the special heritage value that many Canadians attach to our water resources.

I underline the word heritage because it is extremely important. Those were inspired words by Mr. Pearse who was the head of that commission, who reported to the Conservative government in 1985, and whose recommendations are still waiting for action.

Mr. Pearse at that time recommended a full range of water related policy initiatives including drinking water safety, research programs, intergovernmental arrangements and water exports.

The central message of the inquiry's report, it must be said at this point of the discussion, in the words of Peter Pearse was:

We must protect water as a key to a healthy environment and manage what we use efficiently as an economic resource.

• (1310)

We certainly can say that a lot of time has gone by. Members of the opposition have already stressed that point. We are now at the point where a decision must be made in this respect, not only within the confines of the motion but also going beyond so as to encompass water quality, conservation and the concept of security.

Security needs to be redefined. We have to move gradually away from a concept that limits itself to military security to one that is related to natural resources. Certainly water plays a major role in providing the sense of security that any society needs for its present and future.

Today as we speak we can recite a number of applications on water exports that have been proposed in recent months: one in Ontario, one in British Columbia and very recently one in Newfoundland. Evidently we have to take action at the federal level and give the necessary leadership.

As recently as last July an interdepartmental panel of officers representing foreign affairs and Environment Canada debated in Toronto the matter of water. A considerable amount of work has been going on within departments. Now it is a matter that will have to emerge at the political level.

In the ultimate, as the motion suggests, it will have to be a decision that will assert the sovereign right of Canadians. Therefore parliament and the Government of Canada must play a leading role.

The question of quality of water deserves to be given greater emphasis than so far. The confidence of Canadians in drinking water has over recent years declined as demonstrated by the increased sales of water filters, bottled water and the like. There is an impression which has not been dispelled to the effect that the quality of water is not as high as it used to be. Therefore we have to pay attention to that fact either by restoring confidence or by taking measures to improve the quality of municipal water as provided by municipal suppliers.

The addition of chlorine is an issue that emerges from time to time in reports by the International Joint Commission. In one of its reports three years ago it indicated its concern about that particular substance as it affects human health. Evidently we are dealing with a very difficult issue because we all know the advantages of the use of chlorine in disinfecting water. Nevertheless we have signals to which we have to pay attention if our major concern, as I am sure it is for everybody in the House, is for the quality and the health aspect of water.

I have been given an indication that I am splitting time with the member for Barrie—Simcoe—Bradford. Therefore I will comply with that request in the assumption that my time is up.

Supply

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Davenport for his support of the motion.

I also raise a concern with respect to the issue he identified around NAFTA and the implications of NAFTA for bulk freshwater exports.

• (1315)

The hon. member is a very distinguished and longstanding member of this House. He knows that there are serious questions at this time about the possible impact of NAFTA. There have been a number of challenges by American companies that seek to take advantage of what they allege are the provisions of NAFTA with respect to bulk water export.

Judging by the lawsuits that have been launched, for example Sun Belt claiming over \$100 million in damages under the provisions of NAFTA, does the hon. member not agree that if Canada, the United States and Mexico really believe NAFTA does not apply to freshwater exports that there could very well be a memorandum of understanding that would have equal force and effect as the NAFTA itself just to clear up any misunderstanding?

In the absence of that, of course, there is still the possibility of ongoing legal harassment and actions. In light of that, would the hon. member be prepared to support both the amendment and the main motion?

Hon. Charles Caccia: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for having raised again the question of NAFTA and water.

I could allege that the moon is made of Gorgonzola and ask for a memorandum of understanding that it be disclaimed. Having read several times the portion of the NAFTA that covers water, I am fully satisfied that the only reference in that section is to bottled water. If there are certain business interests in the United States that wish to allege the contrary that is their business.

However, I do not think we should fall into the trap of those who claim that assumption in the NAFTA because we just reinforce that kind of notion. The text is clear. It refers only to bottled water. There is no way Canada would go for any agreement in the NAFTA arrangement that would include water. I do not think any government in its right mind would ever agree to that.

Therefore I must confirm what I indicated earlier. This motion ought to be disallowed and should not be given new life in this parliament because it just gives credence to those outside parliament who would like people to believe that water is included in NAFTA.

Mr. Bill Gilmour (Nanaimo—Alberni, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the member for Davenport may be missing the point. Because water is not specifically excluded, it is therefore in. The problem is that it is

in the pot. Raw logs and unprocessed fish are exempted from NAFTA because they are on the list.

What we are suggesting is that we add water to that list. It would take water out of NAFTA. Because it is not specifically excluded, it is by definition in. That is the difficulty we are dealing with today.

Hon. Charles Caccia: Mr. Speaker, there may be a long list of items that are not specifically excluded that one would like to have reference to. However, the fact is what the agreement states is what the agreement is all about. If the agreement specifies water in its bottled form and nothing further than that, it seems to be pretty clear and evident.

• (1320)

Ms. Aileen Carroll (Barrie—Simcoe—Bradford, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a major issue that we address today and one that relates very much to my riding of Barrie—Simcoe—Bradford, impacted as we are by the health of and the need to preserve one of Ontario's major lakes, Lake Simcoe.

Canada is a water rich nation. We are stewards of 9% of the world's renewal freshwater. But in the context of the motion under debate it is important that members realize that export is but one facet of how we manage this life giving resource.

While Canadians enjoy one of the highest standards of clean water in the world, pollution remains an important problem in some of our waters. In some areas people cannot swim or eat the fish they catch or drink the water without it going through extensive purification.

The quality of Canada's freshwater and marine areas is affected by three major water pollution problems, toxic substances, excess nutrients and sedimentation. Toxic substance from industrial, agricultural and domestic use form major pollutants in our water. These include trace elements of PCBs, mercury, dioxins, furans and some pesticides. Some of these substances accumulate through the food chain rather than breaking down in the environment.

These substances enter our water in a variety of ways, including industrial sources such as mining, steel production, accidents such as oil or chemical spills, and contaminated sites such as the Sydney tar ponds in Nova Scotia, municipal waste water effluents and atmospheric deposition from Mexico, the U.S. and Europe in Canada through rain and snow.

Excess nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorous compounds come mainly from municipal sewage and farm run-off containing fertilizers and animal waste. These nutrients can cause excess growth of aquatic plants which then die and decay, depleting water of dissolved oxygen and killing fish.

Sedimentation which we have difficulty with in Lake Simcoe is an increase in the amount of solid particles in water caused primarily by human activities, coming from farming, from forestry

and construction. When sediment settles it can smother the feeding and spawning grounds of fish and kill aquatic organisms.

[*Translation*]

Water pollution affects our health, our environment and our economy. Some of the toxic substances in water have been found to cause cancer. Others pose a threat to reproductive and immune systems and have already been found in the milk of some mothers. The health of all Canadians is threatened, especially that of young children, seniors and natives in the north, who depend on local wildlife for their survival.

Pollution lowers the value in the eyes of industry and raises the household cost of this resource. The economic value of Canadian fresh water used in homes and industry is estimated to be between \$15 million and \$20 million annually.

[*English*]

Canada has made progress in reducing many important water pollution problems. For example, 30 years ago Lake Erie was largely considered to be dead due to excessive nutrients from municipal waste. Today several of the original wildlife species have returned and the lake supports a commercial fishery.

Recent improvements in water quality have resulted in a decline in levels of DDT detected in the breast milk of mothers in southern Ontario and in Quebec since the early 1970s.

Pulp mills have reduced dioxin and furan discharges since 1988 as a result of tougher federal and provincial regulations on pulp and paper effluents. Many B.C. shellfish and bottom fish harvesting areas which we closed because of these pollutants have now reopened. Ecosystem initiatives in several major watersheds have helped to improve water quality. Under the St. Lawrence action plan pollution from 50 priority industries has been reduced since 1988. Under the Great Lakes action plan the harbour in Collingwood, Ontario is restored. The Fraser River action plan has led to a 90% reduction in the release of toxic wood preservative chemicals.

• (1325)

[*Translation*]

Treatment of wastewater has also evolved. For example, municipal treatment systems process up to 75% of Canada's wastewater. Through its infrastructure program, the federal government has given communities \$700 million to help them establish and improve their water and wastewater treatment infrastructures.

[*English*]

The Government of Canada is now addressing water quality concerns through various actions, including a renewed Canadian Environmental Protection Act, CEPA, and the development of a federal freshwater strategy.

Supply

The minister of the environment and the standing committee on the environment are engaged in the process of developing a new CEPA which must improve enforcement as well as control toxic pollutants and other wastes. The freshwater strategy is founded on the need to work co-operatively with provinces and territories in order to better integrate the environmental, economic and social dimensions of freshwater management.

Federal, provincial and territorial governments, industry and communities are also working together to take action on the worst toxics and the worst polluters, broaden the participation of Canadian businesses and establish Canadian-wide standards.

Canada has significantly reduced the flow of pollution into its waters, but the future continues to hold tremendous challenges as environmental issues become larger and more complex. Global demands for pesticides, manufactured chemical goods and products are rising. The number of substances known or strongly suspected to be toxic continues to grow.

The challenge for Canada is to continue to build international co-operation, in particular on heavy metals and persistent organic pollutants. Domestically we must continue to build and encourage leadership and partners with communities, industry and provincial and territorial governments. But it is the federal body which must provide the leadership and initiative to provide the legislative framework which will ensure the protection of Canadian water.

It is this broad approach and not just a focus on water export alone that will provide Canadians with the clean water they need now and in the future. At this critical time I would agree with the motion before us that the government should in co-operation with the provinces and the territories place an immediate moratorium on interbasin transfers and the export of water.

Interbasin transfers can negatively impact the social and economic well-being of people who live in watershed areas. In my community around Lake Simcoe we are tremendously impacted by a watershed area. Indeed it is this major concern that we are debating here today.

This action should be a joint action taken in co-operation with provincial and territorial governments. I have promoted these policies with my colleagues and I stand in the House to do so today.

Mr. Peter Mancini (Sydney—Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the comments of my hon. colleague. I am particularly pleased to hear her highlight the Sydney tar ponds as an area of concern. I look forward to the commitment of some funds in the budget to help remedy that site.

I think her comments are well informed and indicate how important and how scarce freshwater is becoming, given the environmental problems and the whole environmental context she discussed.

Supply

• (1330)

Would she support a ban on the export of freshwater from this country?

Ms. Aileen Carroll: Mr. Speaker, I welcome the hon. member's question and share with him a grave concern about the acute problem in Nova Scotia. It is one that I think will leave us with memories of the Love Canal for those of us who are old enough to remember.

As I have said, I endorse the motion before us for a moratorium on bulk water exports and interbasin transfers. I believe it is the beginning. It allows us for the time to move in a legislative manner in future.

It is ours to show the lead but it is ours also to continue the feeling, the spirit that has been engendered by our recent signing with the provinces on health and social policy, to continue that spirit as well in this very important endeavour.

Mr. Bryon Wilfert (Oak Ridges, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on her comments. She focused on two areas that I think are critical.

One obviously is that this is an environmental issue. The other is the importance to Canadians, particularly in municipal areas.

My riding of Oak Ridges is part of the Oak Ridges moraine, a very sensitive area in Ontario and one where there are studies being done currently to deal with water issues. We have rivers such as the head waters of the Don.

A few years ago a commentator made the pronouncement that the next conflicts in the 21st century will be over water, that water is the critical issue. I certainly support the comments I have heard from all sides of the House today.

With regard to the issue which clearly involves federal, municipal and private sectors, what type of elements does she see as critical in the development of a federal freshwater strategy for Canadians?

Ms. Aileen Carroll: Mr. Speaker, I agree with an emphasis the member has brought to the discussion on the need to be working with colleagues at the municipal level because they are perhaps most closely connected with the issues on a daily basis.

In that regard, I make reference again to Lake Simcoe, a very large and major lake in Ontario, one impacted tremendously by growth and development in the watershed from urbanization and from the agricultural and industrial base as well.

As he mentioned, it is imperative that in developing a freshwater strategy we work closely with our municipal partners as well as our provincial partners to contain and to deal with those issues they are encountering on a daily basis as a result of watershed problems.

We look to an overall freshwater strategy as one that has to encompass before us today, the export of bulk water and a moratorium on interbasin transfers but we look at a larger view. We will be looking to legislation that we know is in process with regard to a freshwater strategy from the federal perspective but again in partnership with our provincial colleagues.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre de Savoye (Portneuf, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak on the motion before the House today on the marketing of water.

Before getting into the commercial aspect, I would like to address the environmental aspect. We are all familiar with water, as we use it on a daily basis. We need it as part of our diet and for washing.

• (1335)

But that is not our only use of water. Water is found in the environment, in the form of rivers, lakes and oceans. By fresh water, we mean water that contains no salt, the water in streams, lakes and rivers, as opposed to that in oceans.

Where does this water come from? It comes from rain, which runs off hills and mountains to become streams, which flow into rivers, which become lakes, which in turn empty into streams, and then rivers to finally reach the ocean.

If these patterns are disturbed, we change the way in which the lands through which these waters pass are irrigated. If we change the way in which these waters reach the ocean, we will eventually alter the salinity of parts of the ocean.

Water, however, does not just irrigate land or quench our thirst. It also transports heat. And one of the by-products of differences in salinity is that ocean currents transfer heat from the south to the north, where waters cool, drop to the bottom of the ocean and return south.

This creates a thermal equilibrium on the planet and large-scale changes. Therefore, if quantities of soft water were to end up in a specific part of the ocean, its salinity would be affected, and this could have a significant impact on the climate of the planet. When reference is made to transfers between catchment areas, we are speaking specifically and definitely of measures which could affect the runoff of freshwater into an ocean or oceans. The consequences of such a transfer might be considerably greater than we were able to foresee.

The greatest caution is therefore necessary, on the engineering level alone, when contemplating changing the movement of water from one basin to another.

The Bloc Québécois shares the concerns that have been expressed by a large number of members of this House since this debate began this morning. We must, however, touch on the aspect

of commercialization. Here it is possible that the Bloc Québécois has concerns that are not shared by all hon. members in this House, particularly if they do not come from Quebec.

Where the commercialization of water is concerned, we are looking at water as a natural resource to be exploited, and no longer as an element of our environment. I have already addressed the question of the environment, and it must not be lost sight of.

Let us look at the aspect of exploitation of a natural resource, nevertheless. Small quantities of water are readily moved from place to place to meet humanity's needs. For instance, a municipality can draw water from a lake to pipe it into our homes. In the country, people drill up to hundreds of feet below the ground to tap the groundwater table for their drinking and washing water. These are small transfers.

If, however, these small transfers multiply, the consequences can be dramatic. In the southwestern United States, for instance, farmers and municipalities have made heavy use of the groundwater table for agricultural irrigation as well as other needs.

• (1340)

The water table has been lowered and is drying up. We recognize that water, our natural resource, must be treated in a very circum-spect manner.

Water does not renew itself quickly or readily. Today, as it rains, there is an abundance of water. Next year, maybe it will rain less, maybe there will be less snow. The level of the lakes will drop. We must be very careful therefore on matters involving water; still, it remains a renewable natural resource.

So the question arises: Whose responsibility is it to manage the use of this resource on a daily basis? I think that, in all the provinces and in Quebec, municipalities have regulated the careful use of drinking water. A number of municipalities already meter the quantity of water used, ensuring that consumers are aware of the quantity consumed, and keep the cost down, with consumption limited to what is needed.

Other municipalities have regulations on watering. Occupants of even-and odd-numbered houses water their lawns on alternate days. Why? To make careful use of a limited natural resource.

The municipalities are also treating the environment with respect by processing waste water. Waste water containing matter in suspension that could harm the environment is not released back into nature, either domestically or industrially. Who is responsible for making sure such measures are in place? To my knowledge, it is the provinces.

In short, water as a natural resource may be used commercially, industrially or municipally in compliance with regulations that are put in place and applied by the provinces and by Quebec.

Supply

Today, we have a motion indicating clearly that this government should adopt regulations and impose measures to make better use of our fresh and drinking water resources.

I am very aware of the importance of caring for our natural resource, water. But I also have a dilemma: the federal government has never had to do anything to ensure communities' access to water resources. It was the provinces, and Quebec, which introduced water conservation, protection, filtration and purification measures. Quebec and the provinces have always shouldered their responsibilities in this sector. So why is the federal government butting in now?

I can understand the federal government, in consultation with the provinces, being given a mandate to make representations internationally, in order to negotiate international accords and amendments to agreements such as NAFTA. This was done in the past, and will no doubt be done again in the foreseeable future.

But if we are talking about authority for marketing the natural resource, I think the federal government is overstepping its bounds. Furthermore, this is an issue in which Quebec has taken an interest for many years and one which has already been in the news for several months in Quebec.

All of a sudden, the federal government wakes up and begins to make a fuss, without realizing that others have already taken the matter in hand, for the very reason that it was their responsibility to do so, not the federal government's.

• (1345)

While I share the concerns of our friends in the New Democratic Party, I differ with them on who has responsibility for marketing this natural resource. We in the Bloc Québécois will therefore be voting against this motion, which would basically deprive Quebec of its historic rights to manage its water resources and turn those rights over to the federal government, which, to all intents and purposes, has never really concerned itself with them.

I would submit to the House that, if it were serious about playing a useful role in this respect, the federal government would have done so 50 or 60 years ago, by protecting the Great Lakes against the shameful pollution that travelled down the St. Lawrence River, turning it into a gigantic sewer for a number of years.

I can remember swimming in Wolfe's Cove, in Quebec City, in my youth. On a nice summer day, there were 5,000 people on the beaches at Wolfe's Cove. There were beautiful sandy beaches and the water was clean enough for swimming. Only 10 or 15 years later, the water had become a public sewer. And as members may suspect, the City of Quebec was not to blame for all this pollution; it was coming from down from the Great Lakes.

Supply

Today, with the international agreements on both the American side and Ontarian side, pollution has been controlled to a large extent. In another 10, 15 or 20 years maybe, we can look forward to having our river back, and swimming will be safe and will not pose a health risk.

As members can see, the federal government's record on protecting our environment and the issue of freshwater and drinking water is not great. I have a problem with a motion like this one being put forward today as if this government, here in Ottawa, were some kind of saviour for the planet, the country or Quebec. So far, the provinces have successfully taken their responsibilities. Arrangements are already in place in British Columbia, and steps are being taken in Quebec. What business does this House have debating a motion on a topic under provincial jurisdiction?

[*English*]

Mr. Dennis J. Mills (Broadview—Greenwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can remember my very first question in the House of Commons. It was 11 years ago and it was to the then environment minister for the Conservative Party who is now the Premier of Quebec.

My first question dealt with the challenge that the national government had in cleaning up the hot spots of the Great Lakes, including the St. Lawrence River. I remember vividly how Mr. Bouchard stood in the House of Commons to courageously and proudly proclaim the responsibility of the Government of Canada to deal not only with the problems of the hot spots on the Great Lakes, but also the St. Lawrence River. In no way shape or form did Mr. Bouchard ever walk away from the responsibility of the Government of Canada to deal with issues related to water.

I do not think for a second that the national government can absent itself from this debate, we well as the fact that it has a major national role to play. Any suggestion by the Bloc Quebecois that taking inventory and managing our water resources is strictly a provincial issue is something I would oppose to the death.

I think the record will show that over the years the Government of Canada, the people of Canada, not just in Quebec but in Ontario, have spent hundreds of millions of dollars not only attempting to reclaim some of our water resources but also making sure that the proper infrastructure is in place so the water resources can be maximized through municipal infrastructure, grants and programs.

• (1350)

The NDP has put the motion before us. Let us approach it in such a way that we work as a national government with the provinces.

I urge members of the Bloc Quebecois not to become so parochial or territorial so as not to interact. These waters flow back and forth from one province to another. We share the Great Lakes.

I would appeal to Bloc members to view water as a national issue. The Government of Canada must have a responsibility and a role to play and the Bloc should encourage the Government of Canada to assume that role.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre de Savoye: Mr. Speaker, if, at some point in time—and I am talking about 40 years ago, not 11—the Government of Canada had taken appropriate measures to make sure our American neighbours did not dump their wastewater into the Great Lakes, thus polluting the St. Lawrence River, which is the backbone of Quebec's development, we would not have the pollution level that exists today.

But this is not what the federal government did 40 or 30 years ago. I am not surprised that the issue was raised 11 years ago in a question. I do not have the wording of the question or of the answer, but the crucial role that the federal government had to take in negotiating with the Americans to ensure the protection of the quality of our water was overlooked. In fact, the same question could be raised on acid rain. The federal government had, and still has, a duty to negotiate on a bilateral basis with the Americans regarding this issue.

[*English*]

Speaking of water in Quebec, the member said that it flows back and forth. I am sorry, with Quebec it is only forth. It comes from here. It goes down to our place.

[*Translation*]

Quebec has assumed its water management responsibilities for 400 years. The hon. member's claim that Canada has a major role to play in showing us how to do things right—something which it has never done, while we have been taking action and achieving good results—is just not valid. The water in Quebec belongs to Quebec.

Mr. Clifford Lincoln (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out to my colleague from the Bloc Quebecois that I find it most unfortunate that he would once again be so narrow-minded in his interpretation of this rather broad motion, which encompasses the federal government and the provinces. I would like to inform him that, when there was a major federal program on cleaner water for Canada, in the 1970s, Quebec was the only province that did not take advantage of this program.

Quebec was the last province—and I know what I am talking about, having been the Quebec minister of the environment—to establish a water purification program. To start telling us that this is a purely federal, or purely provincial, affair, that Quebec is as pure as the driven snow in this matter, and that the federal government has full responsibility for this, is to once again start up this

business of picking quarrels, blaming the other guy, without even looking at one's own faults.

This is most unfortunate, because the question of water goes far beyond narrow-minded parochialism. It is a question that defines the cycle facing us. We should look at the far bigger picture, and try to associate ourselves with a motion that refers not only to the federal government but also to the association of federal and provincial governments in the development of a shared water policy. This, I feel, is the key to everything.

Mr. Pierre de Savoy: This is not narrow-mindedness, Mr. Speaker. The motion before us is very clear. It states that the government should place an immediate moratorium on the export of bulk water shipments. It goes on to say "in co-operation with the provinces". Such co-operation ought to precede the motion. It ought to be verified with the provinces, and with Quebec, whether the moratorium is necessary and desirable.

• (1355)

They are putting the cart before the horse, and yet when we protest about this happening, we are told that we are being too narrow-minded. No, we are not, but we are capable of reading between the lines and capable of protecting Quebec.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

INJURY PREVENTION

Mr. Gary Pillitteri (Niagara Falls, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a recently published study is telling Canadians that the economic and social costs of unintentional injuries in Canada are staggering.

From this study we learned that each year these injuries leave 47,000 Canadians partially and permanently disabled. For example, in the Niagara area alone we had more than 30 deaths this year all due to vehicle accidents.

The officer in charge for the Niagara region at the public health department wrote to me, saying that citizens of Niagara Falls should find this figure totally unacceptable, especially when it is known that 90% of these deaths are both predictable and preventable.

There is a need to acknowledge and seriously address the magnitude of this staggering health and economic problem. Today I am adding my voice in support of those who are calling for a national injury prevention strategy to be established. We must take action so as to cut costs for all Canadians and ultimately save lives.

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TAXATION

Mr. Ted White (North Vancouver, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I have just received the following e-mail message: "Fraud alert. Persons receiving an envelope from an organization calling itself Revenue Canada should treat the contents with great suspicion.

"This group appears to be operating a scam in which it claims the recipients owe it money to pay for the essential operations of the Government of Canada. The money is actually used to fund an endless list of inefficient and pointless social engineering programs.

"Revenue Canada also has ties to a shady outfit known as the Canadian pension plan, whose paycheque deductions have been known to end up financing the same type of wasteful government boondoggles supported by Revenue Canada.

"If a solicitation for funds is received from Revenue Canada, keep in mind that the entire annual taxation scam originates not with it but in the office of the Minister of Finance. It is time that he was held accountable for bilking so many hard working Canadians out of billions of dollars every year".

* * *

CO-OPERATIVE HOUSING

Mr. Roy Cullen (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister responsible for the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. Recently the minister responded to the strong and united voice of the Ontario Liberal caucus by ensuring that co-op housing funded by the federal government will not be part of a transfer of the management of social housing resources to the Government of Ontario.

As a result, some 21,000 individuals and families in Ontario will have their homes preserved in federal hands.

In my riding of Etobicoke North, members of the Comfort Living, Summerlea Park and West Humber Community Co-operatives are fiercely proud of their community lifestyle and applaud the minister for protecting their co-operative.

They, like other co-op members from across the province, will now sleep better knowing that their housing is in safe hands.

* * *

[Translation]

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Guy St-Julien (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on February 2, the Canadian government announced an investment of close to \$1 million in the regions of Quebec,

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under the Canadian Rural Partnership Program. Of that amount, \$475,000 will go to 11 regional projects in Quebec.

Our government is committed to strengthening rural communities and helping rural citizens take advantage of new economic development and employment opportunities.

This type of governmental action has a direct impact upon the communities concerned. We hope to continue this partnership with as many rural communities as possible, in Quebec as well as in the rest of Canada.

* * *

• (1400)

[English]

CALGARY AND QUEBEC CITY INFORMATION EXCHANGE

Ms. Val Meredith (South Surrey—White Rock—Langley, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, this past weekend I had the pleasure to attend le Carnaval in Quebec City. I would like to report to this House that it is possible for friendly people and good cheer to overcome chilly temperatures.

One thing I noticed this past weekend was that there were a number of Calgaryans attending the Quebec carnival. I later found out that Calgary and Quebec City signed a new agreement to co-operate in promoting the exchange of information in the areas of science, technology, economics and tourism.

The two cities also renewed an agreement on the youth exchange program. This agreement has all the elements of improving the prospects for national unity in this country: goodwill, direct communication and above all else, keeping the federal Liberal government out of the process.

* * *

HOUSE OF COMMONS INTERPRETERS

Ms. Carolyn Parrish (Mississauga Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 40 years ago, on January 16, 1959, the House of Commons took the innovative step of providing simultaneous interpretation in English and French thereby giving Canadians an opportunity to follow the debates in the language of their choice.

Today I would like to pay tribute to those individuals who have been our partners ever since.

I urge all members of the House to join with me in paying tribute to the invaluable contribution of our interpreters. They make it possible to share our ideas and everything we feel most passionate about in both official languages as well as in sign language.

Public Works and Government Services Canada and the Translation Bureau can take pride in having such professionals on their staff. Their work does parliament proud.

Congratulations to all of our interpreters. Félicitations.

* * *

GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, there is something wrong with the government when the Department of National Defence spends \$1,000 on a tricycle. That is one sample of the insane spending in my latest waste report. It shows that there is plenty of rot in the system. Taxpayers deserve better than this.

Taxpayers' blood will boil when they hear that foreign affairs spent \$113,000 on Royal Doulton china and that an admiral had a \$120,000 hotel bill while some of our sailors were standing in line at the food bank.

Finally, the government is spending \$4,000 on the provincial flags unity project. The concept is to express national unity, which is quite appropriate because if it keeps spending money like this, Canadians will all be in the poorhouse together.

* * *

PUBLISHING INDUSTRY

Mr. Dennis J. Mills (Broadview—Greenwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-55 is imperative for the continuing success of the Canadian magazine industry.

Advertising revenues represent the single most important source of revenue for Canadian periodical publishers. These revenues have allowed them to nurture the careers of some of our most important literary figures and social commentators.

Without Canadian magazines, how would the first works of future Canadian authors and poets find their way to Canadian readers? Would large foreign publishers print the poetry of a future Margaret Atwood or the historical commentary of a future Jacques Lacoursière?

Advertising revenues allow Canadian publishers to provide a venue for thousands of Canadian photographers, journalists and editors. These revenues help pay the salaries of many creative Canadians.

Allowing foreign publishers unlimited access to the Canadian advertising services market would mean the death of a vital cultural industry, an industry that has played an essential role in the cultivation of Canadian literature, photography and political thought. This is what is at stake in Bill C-55.

HOMELESSNESS

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday community members in Toronto held a vigil in memory of a homeless man known only as Al who died on a heating grate across from Queen's Park.

In January I travelled across Canada and saw for myself the devastating impact of this government's deliberate policy to kill social housing. How many more people will have to suffer? How many more people will have to die before the Prime Minister responds to this crisis?

Ten mayors and more than 400 organizations have endorsed the Toronto Disaster Relief Committee's urgent call to recognize this as a national disaster.

A few hours ago, busloads of homeless and poor people left Toronto for Parliament Hill to demand a meeting with the Prime Minister. His response? He turned them down flat. This is an outrage.

I want to know, will the Prime Minister have the guts to meet with the poor and homeless people who are coming here tomorrow? Will he visit the sites of this national disaster and see the devastation firsthand? Does this government have any compassion?

* * *

YEAR 2000

Ms. Susan Whelan (Essex, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week is Year 2000 Preparedness Week. Yesterday I had the pleasure of tabling the 13th report of the Standing Committee on Industry outlining Canada's state of readiness in several key industrial sectors.

• (1405)

The committee found that most Canadians and Canadian companies and institutions are well aware of the year 2000 problem. However, many small and medium size enterprises have not yet addressed the issue. Firms should begin testing now if they have not already done so. Businesses must realize they could be fully accountable for failure to act. Firms need to prepare contingency plans and business resumption plans to ensure that their business thrives in the new millennium.

There is help for those organizations that do not know where to begin. The year 2000 first step program is a joint Industry Canada and CIBC initiative to give Canadian SMEs access to an affordable customized first step for preparing for the year 2000 challenge.

If we all plan for the worst and hope for the best, we will be able to ring in the new year and millennium with a small sigh of relief.

*S. O. 31***JUSTICE**

Mr. John Harvard (Charleswood St. James—Assiniboia, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, an article in a weekend newspaper has left me with a feeling of deep concern.

In the article Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada Antonio Lamer indicated that judges may avoid making unpopular decisions in cases of heinous crimes rather than suffer severe public criticism. I can empathize with Justice Lamer's comments. No one likes to be publicly vilified. However, I urge our judiciary not to succumb to the kind of bullying that we often hear from Reform Party members.

An essential part of our judicial system is the independence of judges to make decisions according to their understanding of the law. There can be no compromising of that, even in the face of irresponsible acts by the Reform Party.

The recent controversial decision on child pornography offended many Canadians, myself included, but there is an appeal process to deal with that. This is not the time to lose faith in our judges. The rule of law must be respected.

* * *

*[Translation]***SISTERS OF CHARITY OF QUEBEC**

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, our history books often forget or minimize women's contribution to society's development.

For this reason, I would like to honour the very significant contribution to society made by Sister Marcelle Mallet, who, 150 years ago, founded the Congrégation des Soeurs de la Charité de Québec, and 140 years ago, the Couvent de Lévis, now the Marcelle-Mallet school.

The Congrégation's history was marked by all the women who, in Lévis and elsewhere, taught our daughters and, in recent years, our sons. We owe them thanks for that, but they did more. They also visited prisoners, supported victims and helped the sick. They fed the poor, protected orphans and sheltered the aged.

As the member for Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, I would like to thank the Sisters of Charity for all they have done for us and for what they continue to give us.

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*[English]***GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES**

Mr. John Herron (Fundy—Royal, PC): Mr. Speaker, tonight we resume debate on Bill S-11. It will add "social condition" to the Canadian Human Rights Act and will help put an end to the

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discrimination faced by our most marginalized citizens. The Liberals have indicated that they will not support this bill.

While many Canadians do not have the luxury of maintaining adequate housing or the ability to open up a bank account, the PMO last year spent a whopping \$7.5 million federal tax dollars on travel expenses, making the much criticized \$465,000 Mulroney trip to Russia seem like mere pocket change.

An examination of the public accounts reveal that the Prime Minister spent \$1.3 million for a trip to Italy last May with 58 personnel tagging along. An overnight trip to New York took just over \$175,000 out of the coffers to accommodate the PM and 18 advisers.

This blatant disregard for taxpayers must end. I urge this Prime Minister to rethink how he spends our money.

* * *

JUNIOR ACHIEVEMENT GLOBE PROGRAM

Mr. Robert Bertrand (Pontiac—Gatineau—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to bring to your attention a special project that is presently taking place in the Pontiac.

The Pontiac CFDC in Campbell's Bay in partnership with Industries Davidson Incorporated and Junior Achievement are offering a unique opportunity to local students at the Pontiac high school in Shawville. Students will replicate an international business by forming student run, joint venture collaborations with another school located in Jakarta, Indonesia.

The Junior Achievement Globe program is a new dynamic high school program that teaches the value of international business and trade. Through this intensive business experience students will learn practical skills necessary to function in today's business market.

Student exchanges are a component of the program and serve to promote cultural understanding.

Permit me to extend our warmest welcome and congratulations to the three student visitors from Jakarta and their student sponsors from the Pontiac high school.

* * *

• (1410)

NATIONAL FILM BOARD OF CANADA

Mr. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, allow me to join all Canadians in congratulating the National Film Board of Canada on its 63rd Oscar nomination received today from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences in the category of documentary short subject for its production entitled *Sunrise Over Tiananmen Square*.

Directed by Shui-Bo Wang, this animated short film offers a personal perspective on the sequence of events that led up to the June morning in 1989 when government troops opened fire on student demonstrators in Beijing. Shui-Bo Wang is a Chinese artist who was part of the student demonstration that occupied the square for almost a month. This film was produced for the National Film Board by Don McWilliams, Barrie Angus McLean and David Verrall.

We should also be proud of the National Film Board receiving a technical achievement award later this month. This award honours the work of National Film Board scientists Messrs. Zwaneveld and Gasoi who along with colleagues from the private sector developed a post-production technology known as DigiSync Film Keycode Reader.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Roberval.

* * *

[Translation]

THE LATE DENISE LEBLANC-BANTEY

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, a remarkable person, an ardent sovereignist and promoter of women's rights, Denise Leblanc-Bantey, died yesterday. The Bloc Québécois wishes to pay tribute to her and thus perhaps dispel some of our sadness at her passing.

Born into a family whose livelihood was fishing, and a teacher by profession, Denise was elected MLA for Îles-de-la-Madeleine for the first time on November 15, 1976. She brought a breath of fresh air to politics, as only someone who hailed from the Islands could do. Re-elected in April 1981, she was appointed Minister of the Public Service with responsibility for the status of women.

Having worked with her in Quebec's National Assembly, I can speak to the exceptionally energetic and dignified manner in which she fulfilled her duties as an MLA and as a minister, as well as her extraordinary ability as a woman to achieve the perfect combination of professionalism, enthusiasm and humanity in both her public and private lives.

Thank you, Denise, and au revoir.

* * *

[English]

CONSCIENCE RIGHTS

Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Wanuskewin, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, why is it that the rights of a number of Canadian nurses have been violated? Some of them have been forced out of jobs for choosing not to participate in abortion procedures or acts of euthanasia.

The rights of freedom of conscience and religion have long been recognized in Canada. So why has this happened to these nurses? Doctors have the right not to participate in abortion procedures and

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euthanasia, so why not nurses? This is a genuine instance of discrimination.

I have introduced to the House Bill C-461 and I would ask my hon. colleagues and this House to support it. The purpose of that particular bill is to ensure that health care providers will never be forced to participate against their will in procedures such as abortion or acts of euthanasia.

Incredibly there are medical personnel in Canada who have been dismissed because the law is not explicit enough in spelling out their conscience rights. This bill would make those rights explicit.

* * *

DEVCO

Mr. Peter Mancini (Sydney—Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, four unions representing Devco employees met with the Devco president on February 3, 1999 to discuss many details. At the end of this meeting Devco supplied the unions with the employee listings of those who would qualify for pensions and those who would not.

Of the 1,184 employees who have long term service, the list shows that hundreds will not receive pensions. The UMWA list shows 852 members who do not qualify. The CUPE list shows 86 members who do not qualify. The CAW list shows 86 members who do not qualify. The IAM list shows 60 members who do not qualify.

Mr. Drake, the president of the UMWA suggests that “we believe this battle should be recognized across Canada as a reasonable request by reasonable people for fair and just compensation”, and we concur.

* * *

YEAR 2000

Mr. Jim Jones (Markham, PC): Mr. Speaker, last Friday I hosted an information breakfast on the year 2000 problem in my riding of Markham. About 100 people joined me to learn how some of the Canadian leading firms are addressing this issue. Whether it was listening to Gary Baker from the Arthur Andersen consulting group, Al Aubry from IBM or Rod Morris from CIBC, breakfast attendees were reassured that the private sector by and large is ready for the millennium bug.

Unfortunately the federal government cannot make that same claim. According to the most recent auditor general’s report various important government systems remained at risk as of last June. Furthermore the auditor general concluded that some essential government services may be interrupted at the start of year 2000.

• (1415)

As this is year 2000 awareness week I urge the federal government to follow the lead of the private sector to take stronger and

more effective action so that Canadians can easily rest assured about indispensable public services.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

APEC INQUIRY

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, look who is in question period today. I guess he had 24 hours notice.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order, please. I would ask the hon. member to please not refer to attendance.

Miss Deborah Grey: Certainly, Mr. Speaker. I do not want to even ask a question about that appalling lack of judgment, so I will ask another one.

Yesterday a new memo marked “secret, no copies” was released from the Privy Council Office to the APEC hearing. It quotes the Prime Minister in his own words promising he would do whatever it took to keep Canadian protesters from embarrassing Suharto.

Is the Prime Minister still saying he had nothing to do with security arrangements at APEC?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I replied to this question many, many times since last fall. There is an ongoing inquiry and it will look at all the facts.

The government is collaborating with the commission. We are making all documents and people available so that the commission can report.

I repeat what I said before. I never discussed security with anybody involved with the security arrangements of this meeting.

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, in fact there was a new memo, new information released in Vancouver yesterday. Do you know where that is, Mr. Speaker? It is a 20 minute chopper ride south of Whistler.

It quotes the Prime Minister in his own words. He begged Suharto to come. He promised he would use whatever it took to suppress the protesters. He even bragged about how he had done it before for the Chinese premier. It is all out in the open right now.

Why is he so stubborn that he still refuses to accept responsibility even now that he is caught?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is an inquiry into the incident. The commission will start

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to hear all the witnesses and look at what happened in Vancouver, at whether the police acted properly or not.

If it needs to ask more questions, we said that everybody in my office and in the government is available. Let the commission look into the facts and do not draw conclusions before knowing the facts, as the hon. member is very good at doing.

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, there is really only one witness who could probably tell the whole story.

In all these major issues—the Somalia inquiry, hepatitis C, child pornography and APEC—the Prime Minister is always more concerned about how he looks than in doing what is right. How far is he willing to go? If he is subpoenaed to the inquiry, will he refuse to go there too?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member should wait for the commission to do its work. I said in the House, and I repeat, that in Canada the RCMP is known to be very efficient police. The commission is looking at whether they acted properly at that time.

We said we will offer all the collaboration needed by the judge who is presiding over the commission, so that he knows all the facts and can inform the public. I always said, and I repeat, that in many, many instances in the past when we have visitors in Canada, including at the G-7 meeting in Halifax, the RCMP acted extremely well.

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, speaking of the commission and the judge, he has recommended funding for the students so that this is a fair process.

The solicitor general has had another 24 hours to take a look at that. I know it is a very difficult question but let me put it to him again. Is he going to fund the students? Yes or no.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated to my hon. colleague yesterday, I have received a letter. I will review it with my staff and when I do so I will make it public.

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, obviously this very difficult question is beyond the capacity of the solicitor general, so let me ask the Prime Minister.

• (1420)

Considering that Justice Hughes has asked for funding for the students in order for there to be a fair process, will the students receive funding from the government? Yes or no.

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think the solicitor general gave a very good answer earlier.

[Translation]

KING OF JORDAN'S FUNERAL

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has the unfortunate habit of not admitting that he is capable of making a mistake. Yesterday, the Bloc Québécois gave him the benefit of the doubt, but the facts are overwhelming.

In an attempt to cover up his error in judgment, the Prime Minister cited scheduling problems as an excuse for his failure to attend the King of Jordan's funeral. This was another error in judgment, because the facts are there for examination.

What explanation can the Prime Minister give us today for the fact that he preferred skiing to fulfilling his official responsibilities?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member must know that the Department of National Defence informed me and my office that it could not make the necessary arrangements to get me to the funeral in time.

We had done all the planning and a PMO team was already on site but, because there were less than 24 hours between the death and the funeral, it was unfortunately impossible for the Canadian armed forces to get me there.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the United States showed more consideration and foresight in planning for a precipitous departure, and there were even three former presidents in the delegation accompanying President Clinton.

I ask the Prime Minister whether he does not think his first error in judgment was to head off skiing last Thursday, instead of remaining in Ottawa, when the entire world knew that the king was near death?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if I had had a Boeing 747, as President Clinton does, I could have made the trip non-stop.

The Prime Minister of Canada does not have a jet at his disposal for travelling around the world. The hon. member should perhaps move that a Bombardier aircraft, a Global Express, be bought for that purpose. If the opposition asks me to buy one, I would be pleased to study the proposal.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has been trying for the past couple of days to rationalize his error in judgement in failing to attend King Hussein's funeral because he could not get there in time.

How could the Prime Minister give such a lame excuse, when the Liberal members of the Canadian delegation had been on standby in Ottawa since Friday, ready to leave for Jordan on short notice?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we had been preparing for a possible state funeral since last week and expected to receive adequate notice so that I could attend.

However, since the funeral was held on less than 24 hours' notice, it was impossible for the Canadian Armed Forces to take me where I wanted to go, in spite of the fact that I had made arrangements to attend the funeral.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister was so prepared to go that the opposition was notified at 8 a.m. and the Prime Minister at 10 a.m., Ottawa time.

Will the Prime Minister admit that the only thing we know for sure in this whole affair is that the decision not to travel to Jordan had been made before he even left for Vancouver?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's assertion is totally wrong, because I have been in constant communication with my office throughout the weekend and I was planning to go.

What was not planned was for the funeral to be held within 24 hours of King Hussein's death.

* * *

[English]

HOMELESSNESS

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister was too busy skiing to attend the funeral of King Hussein. Now we have learned that the Prime Minister is too busy to meet a delegation of Canada's homeless who will be in Ottawa tomorrow, too busy to think about the plight of hundreds of thousands of Canada's homeless.

What sport will the Prime Minister use as an excuse this time?

• (1425)

[Translation]

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member likes to make personal attacks.

I did make time while on holiday to attend the funeral of the Inuit who were killed by the avalanche in New Quebec. Also, the same day that an attempt was made on my life, I took a plane to attend Premier Rabin's funeral.

I had made all the arrangements to attend King Hussein's funeral, but the Canadian Armed Forces said they could not get me there. Regarding the delegations, our ministers are there to receive people. There is a well-established procedure and they follow it.

The Speaker: The leader of the New Democratic Party.

[English]

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for the Prime Minister winter is fun: skiing, skating, snowboarding,

whatever. However for Canada's homeless winter is hell: huddling in doorways, sleeping on open grates, lining up at soup kitchens.

These are not imaginary homeless people. These are real men, women and children. Will the Prime Minister reconsider? Will he go to see for himself so the government will finally provide some relief to the human horror—

The Speaker: The Right Hon. Prime Minister.

[Translation]

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Public Works and Government Services is the minister responsible for the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

He made a statement a few days ago and, in the past few weeks, new money has been allocated to deal with this problem. I wish the hon. member would take the time to look at the facts before making totally unfounded accusations as she does all the time.

* * *

KOSOVO

Mr. David Price (Compton—Stanstead, PC): Mr. Speaker, we learned this morning that peace negotiations on Kosovo are in jeopardy.

Did the Prime Minister consult the Minister of National Defence before making his announcement in Switzerland, as to whether or not Canada could send to Kosovo troops that are well trained and well equipped?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when I was in Davos, I indicated that Canada would be prepared to participate, should this be necessary.

I did not make a commitment. I said we would be prepared to consider participating in Kosovo, as we have done in the part of the former Yugoslavia that is experiencing problems. NATO has not yet made a decision. Negotiations are currently taking place in Rambouillet, close to Paris, and we will await the outcome of these negotiations before making a decision.

[English]

Mr. David Price (Compton—Stanstead, PC): Mr. Speaker, in an answer to my question about Kosovo yesterday the Minister of National Defence said that Canada had not been formally asked for ground troops.

Has Canada been informally asked for ground troops for Kosovo? If so, who and when?

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I indicated yesterday that preliminary plans were being developed by the NATO military command with the

Oral Questions

possibility of there being a peacekeeping force in Kosovo if it should be agreed upon in the peace agreement talks now going on in Rambouillet, France. If that becomes the case then Canada certainly would consider what possible role it could take part in.

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, under this finance minister Canadians are paying more and getting less, and that is a fact. Since 1993 Canadians have seen their taxes rise by \$38 billion.

This year the finance minister will take \$38 billion more out of their pockets than five years ago. At the same time savings accounts for Canadians have diminished by \$38 billion.

How can this finance minister bill himself as a tax cutter when he is ripping \$38 billion out of people's personal savings and their pocketbooks every year?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that government revenues from personal income taxes have increased. It has done so because over the course of the last 12 months there have been 526,000 new jobs created. That why it has happened. Over the course of the last year there have been over 200,000 new jobs created for young Canadians, 44,000 in the last month. The Canadian economy is clicking on all cylinders and it is because the Canadian private sector is operating in a climate of—

• (1430)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Medicine Hat.

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, notice how the finance minister did not answer the question. He kind of ran away from the question.

Why in the world is this finance minister running around billing himself as a tax cutter when Canadians' taxes continue to go ever upward, \$38 billion higher than they were five years ago? There have been 38 tax hikes since this minister came to power. How does he square the two? How does he tell Canadians he is a tax cutter when all we get are cuts to health care? How does he do it?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member raised the spectre of cuts to health care.

I would ask him to do two things. First, I would ask him to wait for the budget next Tuesday.

Second, I would ask him to answer the question that was put to him yesterday. Where is he going to find the \$7 billion to \$16 billion in cuts his party is advocating as a result of its tax package? How will it justify this and when will it tell Canadians it wants to cut pensions, equalization and health care? It wants to slash the fabric of the country. That is its agenda.

[Translation]

SOCIAL UNION AGREEMENT

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs said yesterday that it was the Quebec government that refused to include the notion of distinct society in the social union agreement which, as we know, Quebec did not sign.

Instead of overreacting as he has since the beginning and threatening to impose that agreement on Quebec against its will, should the minister not check with the Prime Minister to see if he agrees with him that Quebec should be deprived of its fair share, as the minister has been threatening in the past few days?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the chances of finding ourselves in a disagreement such as the one referred to by the hon. member and by the Quebec premier yesterday are greatly reduced, since the Government of Canada has pledged to comply with the framework agreement on social union, which will significantly increase our ability to work in partnership for the benefit of all Canadians.

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, because he is upset at Quebec for not signing his social union proposal, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs is threatening to deprive our province of funds.

How can the minister claim to feel bound by the government's motion on distinct society, when he is resorting to blackmail to get Quebec to fall in line with all the other provinces?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am not at all concerned about this type of issue, because I am very confident that, as the debate goes on, it will focus more and more on the content of the agreement.

Perhaps I should mention just one clause and ask the hon. member to reflect on it: "A provincial government which, because of its existing programming, does not require the total transfer to fulfill the agreed objectives would be able to reinvest any funds not required for those objectives in the same or a related priority area."

* * *

[English]

TAXATION

Mr. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, here is a reality check for the finance minister.

Oral Questions

Under his watch taxes are up \$38 billion, health care funding has been slashed \$16 billion. We know taxpayers deserve better than that.

When will the finance minister stop his high tax, health cut agenda?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in order to have a legitimate debate over tax policy it is important for each political party to lay down its assumptions.

In the budget next week we will do ours as we did ours in the last budget where we cut \$7 billion.

The Reform Party has said it will taxes substantially but it has not said where it will find the spending cuts to pay for those tax cuts. The Reform Party owes it to the Canadian people to basically set out its agenda. Whether it is hidden or not it should now see the light of day.

Mr. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, Ref.): We are here today to debate your policies, not ours. We will get there next time round.

The Speaker: I ask the hon. member to direct his statements through the Speaker.

Mr. Gerry Ritz: Mr. Speaker, how can the finance minister continue to defend this ridiculous shell game he is playing, forcing Canadians to pay more and get less?

The legacy is high taxes, 38 tax hikes, health care slashed, 180,000 people still in waiting lines. When will it stop?

• (1435)

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, either the Reform program and those tax cuts are real, in which case there are spending cuts that will justify them, or the numbers are pulled out of thin air.

The only issue now before the Canadian people is do Reformers have some kind of policy or are they nothing but windbags?

The Speaker: I would ask all hon. members to be judicious in their choice of words.

* * *

[*Translation*]

APEC

Mr. Richard Marceau (Charlesbourg, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has always said that the RCMP Public Complaints Commission would be able to cast full light on his involvement in the APEC affair.

Yet, last December, its chair stated: “The Prime Minister is not part of my mandate”.

How is it that the Prime Minister has told us on numerous occasions that the commission could investigate his involvement, when the chair of the commission says the opposite?

[*English*]

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the public complaints commission reviews complaints brought to it by civilians against the RCMP, which is exactly what it is doing.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Marceau (Charlesbourg, BQ): Mr. Speaker, according to secret documents, the Prime Minister discussed security concerns and the comfort of dictator Suharto with the Indonesian ambassador.

The Prime Minister apparently even boasted of Canada’s experience in managing such politically sensitive visits.

How could the Prime Minister claim to have never discussed with Suharto’s people any questions relating to his security and comfort, when there are secret documents revealing the very opposite?

[*English*]

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has indicated many times in the House that he and his ministers will co-operate fully with the public complaints commission, and that is what we will do as a government.

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THE BUDGET

Mr. Paul Forseth (New Westminster—Coquitlam—Burnaby, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the finance minister huffs an awful lot about Reform ideas to deflect from his bad record, but he knows absolutely nothing about economic freedom.

The truth is the finance minister has taken \$38 billion extra from Canadians’ pockets since he came to power and has greatly hurt health care.

I am ask simply and directly why he is promising some tax relief yet going to give tax hikes? Will Canadians get real tax relief this year?

Hon. Paul Martin (LaSalle—Émard, Lib.): Wait for the budget.

Mr. Paul Forseth (New Westminster—Coquitlam—Burnaby, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the House has heard how the finance minister spins a line and says everything is okay while average Canadians are hurting from the tax man.

There is another fact. Since 1993 he has taxed back 155% of wage increases of Canadians. This is not good enough to pay for the increases. He also wants to go after the savings.

Oral Questions

I will ask him this simple question again. Will Canadians pay less on the bottom line this year, yes or no?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we brought in tax relief in the last budget. We are going to bring in tax relief in this budget.

On the other hand, I can understand that this member might have missed it. He might have slept through the budget.

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[Translation]

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the women's program has been reorganized at the expense of women.

In fact, Status of Women Canada has decided to do away with the support component of its program, and this has deprived women's centres in Quebec and in Canada of thousands of dollars.

As the strategy to provide financial support to women's centres produces excellent long-term results, can the Minister of State for the Status of Women commit, for the good of women, to going back on her decision and restoring this funding immediately?

[English]

Hon. Hedy Fry (Secretary of State (Multiculturalism)(Status of Women), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the women's program has been funding women NGOs in this country for many years. There is a fair share campaign that has been asking for more funding and we are looking at that issue. We would welcome more funding.

However, the issue of the funding of the women's program is that it has managed to do so much with the budget we have. No women's programs have been cancelled in this country as a result of the funding of the programs to date.

* * *

• (1440)

[Translation]

YEAR 2000 BUG

Mr. Eugène Bellemare (Carleton—Gloucester, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Industry.

There are only 325 days left until the end of the century, and the public is concerned increasingly about the year 2000 bug.

[English]

Members of the House have heard about what the government is doing regarding Y2K readiness and what businesses should be doing.

Has the Minister responsible for consumer affairs forgotten Canadian consumers?

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is right, 325 days left is not very long. We have not forgotten about consumers.

This week we are delivering brochures to every household across this country hoping to give Canadian consumers an indication of the kinds of things they ought to be concerned about as they prepare for the change of the millennium. Some things will be affected in their household, many will not.

In that context I commend the work of the industry committee which this week released its second report on the Y2K problem. It is another important contribution to ensuring that Canada is one of the most prepared countries—

The Speaker: The hon. member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast.

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JUSTICE

Mr. John Reynolds (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice.

In Montreal two men are convicted of a brutal rape. In Ottawa a woman is convicted of killing her husband with two bullets to the head. In Ottawa a man is convicted of killing his mother. What do all these crimes have in common? They all went home instead of going to jail.

When will the Minister of Justice change this law so that those convicted of these violent crimes go to jail instead of going home?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows, as I have said in the House on a number of occasions, there are five cases from five different courts of appeal that will be heard by the Supreme Court of Canada this spring.

If after hearing those cases it appears that changes need to be made to the law, I can assure this House I will make those changes.

Mr. John Reynolds (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is time for the minister to get out of the classroom and get down to real living.

These people convicted of these violent crimes are going home. That does not mean locked in at home. They are going to movies in their neighbourhood today. They are going shopping today.

When will the minister take the action she should as Minister of Justice and make sure no more cases like what happened in Ottawa this last weekend happen anywhere else in Canada?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member speaks of timeliness.

Oral Questions

He is a member of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. In April 1998 I wrote to the standing committee asking it to review judicial sentencing. I asked it for its advice and its input as to how the law, if at all, should be reformed. Have I heard a word from it? Not one word. I am waiting.

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NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Dick Proctor (Palliser, NDP): Mr. Speaker, of 13 military officers who took anthrax while stationed in Kuwait last year, 8 of them still have visible lumps on their arms from the injections, some lumps as big as loonies.

All 13 officers and their families have lumps in their throats as well. All are distraught and concerned about the health and safety because of the potential side effects that they are only now beginning to hear about. These men and women want straight answers which might help them deal with fear of the unknown they are experiencing.

When the minister and DND enlighten these Canadians with the best up to date information available?

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am sorry to hear that some people are still experiencing difficulties in this regard. I am sure that our people in the medical profession of the Canadian forces would want to do everything they can to assist them.

The vast majority of people who took the anthrax serum had no problems whatsoever. The United States forces, which had the same serum, had a very small percentage of people who had any reaction at all.

Our medical people believed that was is a safe serum to administer. Given the threats that existed in the gulf at the time it was the appropriate thing to do as a safeguard.

• (1445)

Mr. Dick Proctor (Palliser, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Master Corporal Dennis Biden is a decorated 19 year veteran of the forces who says he will never again trust his superiors since learning that they knowingly injected him with the stale-dated anthrax vaccine.

This father of two wants to know: Was DND aware that the vaccine was outdated? Was the Canadian government aware in advance of the re-labelling? Was it aware that some vials contained moulds? Was any pre-testing of the vaccine done? Will the minister ensure that those forced to take this chemical cocktail will be eligible for a medical pension as the long term effects are truly unknown?

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all of those questions have been answered and I think the member well knows the answers.

Nobody was given anything that was stale-dated or mouldy or anything else that would be harmful to them. It was all tested and re-tested and medical professionals approved the ultimate giving of those inoculations.

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BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT BANK

Mr. Jim Jones (Markham, PC): Mr. Speaker, Yvon Duhaime misled federal officials about his criminal record, has a track record of not paying his taxes or his creditors and sank the first instalment of his federal handout straight into his personal bank account.

In short, he has all the wrong credentials for getting government money, except that he bought a hotel from the Prime Minister and his friends. We already have reports that contractors for the hotel expansion have not been paid.

Can the Minister of Industry assure this House that Duhaime is using the \$615,000 loan for the hotel expansion and not for any outstanding personal debts?

The Speaker: I think the first part of the question would be in order, but I do not know how the minister would know anything about the second part.

Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry, Lib.): I agree, Mr. Speaker.

What we know is that the loan was granted in the ordinary course. It was a commercial loan. It was part of a broader financing package that included financing given by private sector lenders. It was not only the Business Development Bank of Canada which advanced money. It was secured by a mortgage, a hypothèque, on the property. It was at commercial rates.

If the member has a problem with the Business Development Bank lending on hotel properties, then he ought to raise it at committee.

Mr. Jim Jones (Markham, PC): Mr. Speaker, no ordinary Canadian would loan Yvon Duhaime \$100, let alone over \$800,000 in loans and grants courtesy of the taxpayer. Then again, no ordinary Canadian can spend millions of other people's money on lavish travel. No ordinary Canadian can find high paying political jobs for their relatives.

I ask the Cadillac Prime Minister, who happily cut the ribbon—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Hastings—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington.

*Oral Questions***CANADIAN FARMERS**

Mr. Larry McCormick (Hastings—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food announced in December that the Government of Canada would provide \$900 million of assistance to help producers get through the current farm crisis.

Where are the cheques?

Mr. Joe McGuire (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely right. Last December we did announce a \$900 million whole farm national disaster assistance program.

In the interim the provinces have been giving money to farmers in need because our payout will be based on income tax returns.

At the February 23 and 24 national safety conference in Victoria the minister will be announcing the final details. Applications will become available in March and the final payout will be made in June, whether or not the provinces are on side.

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YEAR 2000

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, according to a recent human resources development audit it was reported that there is a one in ten chance that essential seniors' benefits could be compromised by the millennium bug problem.

Recently the industry minister launched a PR campaign about the Y2K, telling Canadians not to worry about buying powdered milk.

• (1450)

When was the Minister of Industry going to tell us about the devastating potential effects on essential services to seniors which could possibly leave them high and dry?

Hon. Marcel Massé (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, these government-wide mission critical systems, as they are called, are being tested regularly. In particular, those mentioned by my hon. colleague have already been tested and we have been told they will work perfectly well, so there should be no fearmongering, especially among senior citizens because their federal pension cheques will be paid.

[Translation]

JEAN-LESAGE AIRPORT

Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Jean-Lesage airport is an important infrastructure for Quebec City's economic development.

However, the manager of the airport transfer, Daniel Paiement, recently stated that the Government of Canada had neither a specific plan for the airport nor any requirements as to its future cost effectiveness.

Does the Minister of Transport interpret the situation in the same way as his official, with no specific objective regarding cost effectiveness?

Hon. David M. Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is a policy on national airports, and this policy works well. We are currently discussing the future of this airport with the people of Quebec City, and I think it will have a great future.

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[English]

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

Mr. John Solomon (Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the RCMP is short staffed 400 constables. In seven years more than half of the 16,000 member force will be eligible for retirement but no new cadets are being trained at the RCMP training depot in Regina.

Last week the solicitor general said he was giving the RCMP "the tools it needs to fight crime". What action will the solicitor general take to make sure we have enough RCMP to use these tools to fight crime and can he assure us there will be sufficient funds in the budget to address this dangerous development in police protection?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not believe I will indicate what is in the budget, but I will indicate that I and the RCMP have been dealing with Treasury Board with respect to any shortcomings in funding for the RCMP. We will train the RCMP as we always have in this country.

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PUBLISHING INDUSTRY

Mr. Mark Muike (West Nova, PC): Mr. Speaker, for months Canadians have been reading about possible U.S. retaliation over Canada's introduction of Bill C-55. The U.S. has threatened to impose sanctions against a number of our industries, including

lumber and steel. The international trade minister's occasional wavering in light of these threats has effectively caused fear amongst our Canadian industries.

Can the Minister of Canadian Heritage assure Canadians that Bill C-55 is an ironclad piece of legislation that could survive any possible U.S. challenge to the WTO or the NAFTA? As well, could she confirm that it conforms with Canada's charter of rights?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member and his party, and in fact most of the parties in this House for their steadfast and unwaivering support for Bill C-55.

I can say that it is the position of the government that this bill respects every one of our national and international obligations.

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REVENUE CANADA

Ms. Sophia Leung (Vancouver Kingsway, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Revenue. No one likes to pay taxes. We assume that the system is fair to every Canadian taxpayer. What has the minister done to make the tax system fair for every Canadian?

Hon. Harbance Singh Dhaliwal (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we all understand, fairness is very important. That is why last March I initiated a fairness review to ensure there is fairness for all Canadians.

This morning I launched a seven point action plan to ensure to all Canadians that there is fairness in our tax system and that we will provide better service and fairness.

* * *

• (1455)

YEAR 2000

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, this government's own audit reports that there is a one in ten chance that essential services could be compromised by the Y2K problem and we just heard the minister say that the government is working on the problem.

What assurances can the minister give Canadian seniors that it will not affect the essential services which are provided to them?

Hon. Marcel Massé (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, the systems that apply to senior citizens, in particular those that affect their pension cheques, are of course critical to the government and we have been dealing with them. The department of human resources has spent millions of dollars reviewing its systems. They now indicate that these systems are ready and will work on January 1, 2000.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

EXPORT OF CANDU REACTORS

Mrs. Maud Debien (Laval East, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister for International Trade.

In December, the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade released a report recommending, and I quote: "That the Parliament of Canada conduct a separate and in-depth study on the domestic use, and foreign export of, Canada's civilian nuclear technology".

Why is the Minister for International Trade delaying a moratorium on the export of Candu reactors until all the dangers involved in the use of this reactor are known?

[English]

Hon. Sergio Marchi (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it has been shown that Candu reactor technology is a leading technology not only that we wish to export, but we also have the faith of using it here in Canada.

We have promoted Candu technology. It is not only safe, but it is also affordable and certainly superior to any other existing technology. It needs to be seen as an alternate to burning dirty coal, as many countries around the world still do, which is not a solution to the important issue of climate protection.

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HOMELESSNESS AND POVERTY

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a few hours ago busloads of poor and homeless people left Toronto to come to Ottawa to meet with the Prime Minister, but the Prime Minister flatly refused to meet with this group.

What happened to Liberal compassion? Was it axed too, along with social housing? Canadians want to know why the PM is ignoring this crisis of homelessness and poverty and why his government is so callously abandoning those most in need.

This is an emergency. What action is the Prime Minister going to take?

Hon. Alfonso Gagliano (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member speaks of Liberal compassion. We have contributed \$300,000 to the Ann Golden report. CMHC is committing \$750,000 to research related to the homeless. CMHC provided mortgage insurance to the Woodgreen Red Door emergency family shelter, a 50-bed homeless shelter in Toronto. CMHC is actively supporting a partnership among governments and the private sector to develop affordable housing to address problems faced by the homeless. Twenty-eight hundreds units were built in 1998 and 3,000 will be built this year.

*Privilege***PUBLICATION INDUSTRY**

Mr. Mark Muise (West Nova, PC): Mr. Speaker, for months Canadians have been reading about possible U.S. retaliation over Canada's introduction of Bill C-55.

The U.S. has threatened to impose sanctions against a number of our industries, including lumber and steel. The occasional wavering of the Minister for International Trade in the light of these threats has effectively caused fear among our Canadian industries.

Can the minister of trade assure Canadians that Bill C-55 is an ironclad piece of legislation that could survive any possible U.S. challenge to the WTO or the NAFTA, or is this another MMT?

Hon. Sergio Marchi (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, not only does the member have something in his water but his ears are obviously plugged because the minister of heritage answered that very question moments ago.

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, this year taxes will be going up \$2.4 billion. We know that for sure. The finance department has been floating figures that—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

• (1500)

The Speaker: Order. I want to hear the question.

Mr. Monte Solberg: No manners, Mr. Speaker.

Taxes are going up \$2.4 billion this year. The finance department is saying it will cut taxes by \$2 billion. That means Canadians are going to be worse off again this year for the sixth year in a row under this finance minister.

How does the minister square his self billed proclamation as being a tax cutter when taxes are going to go up once again this year?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we made it very clear in the last budget as we will in the next and in fact in each and every budget, that we will be bringing down taxes. In addition to that, we are going to preserve the health care system. In addition to that, we are going to invest in productivity and research and development, in the very sinews of our modern economy. We are going to give Canadians the tools they require to triumph in the 21st century.

The Speaker: There are two questions of privilege and then I will go to a point of order.

PRIVILEGE

DEVCO

The Speaker: The hon. member for Sydney—Victoria last week raised a question of privilege which involved the hon. Minister of Natural Resources.

I believe, if I can put it into context, that there was a meeting which took place either in or near the member's riding. He said, I believe, that he was unable to make it and a member of his staff was not allowed to enter the meeting. Is that correct?

Mr. Peter Mancini (Sydney—Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it was a lock-up in my riding having to do with the announcement regarding Cape Breton Development Corporation. I received notice of that meeting early in the morning. I made arrangements to be in my riding. During the lock-up, my understanding is that journalists were allowed in and my staff was not.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member. The hon. minister who was named is here. Perhaps he could respond.

Hon. Ralph E. Goodale (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to address the complaint that was raised by the member for Sydney—Victoria after question period on Monday last week. It had to do with two separate events associated with the announcement of the government's plans with respect to Cape Breton Development Corporation.

In commenting, I am at a bit of a disadvantage because I was not personally involved in either event. However, I have been assured by those with direct knowledge that the following is an accurate recounting.

The first issue raised by the member dealt with the scheduling of the announcement. On January 27 at about 9 o'clock in the morning the member for Sydney—Victoria and the member for Bras d'Or—Cape Breton were in the waiting room of my office in the Confederation Building. At that time the member for Bras d'Or—Cape Breton indicated that she had heard that an announcement with respect to Devco was coming in the next two or three weeks. The members were told by a member of my staff that an announcement was imminent and that it would take place sooner rather than later.

In fact later that day, January 27 at about 5 o'clock in the afternoon, we received confirmation from the Privy Council Office authorizing me to make an announcement on the future direction of Devco.

• (1505)

So there can be no confusion, allow me to once again emphasize the chronology of that day. On January 27 at about nine o'clock in the morning my staff informed the two MPs that an announcement

was imminent and that it would take place sooner rather than later. At about five o'clock in the afternoon on that same day, that is about eight hours after the conversation between my staff and the two MPs, my office received a call from the PCO informing us that we were authorized to make an announcement. Given our desire to end the uncertainty faced by the people of Cape Breton, the decision was made to announce the next day.

The second issue pertains to a media briefing by officials which took place on the day of the announcement. My office advised a staff member in the office of the member for Sydney—Victoria that the media briefing was, as the words themselves imply, for the media. In addition his office was also told that it would be receiving a copy of the information package prior to a media conference at which the announcement would be made. Copies of that information package were hand delivered to both the Parliament Hill and riding offices of both the member for Sydney—Victoria and the member for Bras d'Or—Cape Breton. As promised by my office, these packages did arrive prior to the beginning of that media conference.

However the key point is that the media and the members for Sydney—Victoria and Bras d'Or—Cape Breton were not the only people to receive the information prior to the media conference. While officials briefed the media, I met personally with union leaders and others and most important with miners and their families to describe the impending announcement and to answer their questions. I can confirm that the member for Bras d'Or—Cape Breton was in the room for that discussion with the miners and others and the member for Sydney—Victoria and/or his staff could well have been there too. Both members of parliament were present at the subsequent media conference for the announcement itself.

It is clear that we tried very hard to treat everyone fairly and appropriately in what were very difficult and emotional circumstances. It was certainly no one's intention to cause any offence.

The Speaker: The matter has been raised by the member and he put his case before the House. It is always sad when all of the things we would like to mesh in our busy lives do not mesh. It seems that we have a grievance on the part of the member that neither he nor his staff were present at the meeting he mentioned. We now have an explanation from the minister. This is an interpretation of the facts.

I would rule this is not a question of privilege.

HEALTH CANADA

The Speaker: I want to address myself to the whip of the Reform Party who sent me a note during question period with regard to a question of privilege raised by the hon. member for Macleod. This question of privilege named specifically the Minister of Health who is here in the House.

Privilege

This is my problem. Whereas I have ruled in the past that the two members who are involved should be in the House at the same time, for whatever reason, the member for Macleod is not here today. Although we have asked the hon. Minister of Health to be here, I believe that in keeping with our precedents of the past, we should hold until the Minister of Health can respond directly to the member for Macleod. Unless I get some direction otherwise, or there is full agreement, that is the way I would rule.

Mr. Randy White (Langley—Abbotsford, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to your comments I would be most happy, with the unanimous consent of the House, to stand in for the member for Macleod and to listen to the conversation and deal with it.

The Speaker: As all members know, by unanimous consent we can do whatever we want in this House. Do we give ourselves permission as a House to hear a response by the hon. Minister of Health on a question of privilege? Is there agreement?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

• (1510)

The Speaker: I will now give the floor to the hon. Minister of Health. Does he understand the point raised in the point of privilege?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, you are very kind.

I thank my colleagues opposite for raising this point, having brought to my attention that some days ago a news release left my office in relation to the appointment of a Liberal Party caucus committee on an issue. The news release was inappropriately on the stationery of Health Canada. It ought to have been on the stationery of my riding office or my office as a member of parliament. I am grateful to the member for bringing it to my attention and to the House's attention. He is right. It ought to have gone on the other stationery and I regret that it did not.

I want the House to know that I asked the member for Waterloo—Wellington to look into this issue because we are very concerned about the issue of youth smoking. At the end of the day I hope that members will agree that that issue and how we do something about it is more important than the issue of stationery.

The Speaker: As I recall the circumstance, the issue that I was looking at primarily was that this announcement went out on paper from the department and that was the point of privilege which was brought up.

Now we have the hon. Minister of Health, the member of parliament, rising to tell us that indeed it was an error. From my understanding he has said it was an error and he is correcting it as best as he can.

Supply

I do not want to put words in the minister's mouth but basically he apologized for what went on. Is that correct?

Hon. Allan Rock: Mr. Speaker, that is correct.

Mr. Chuck Strahl: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

The Speaker: Just a small one. It is going to be so small that by the time I hit I am up again.

Mr. Chuck Strahl: Mr. Speaker, just to clarify, I thank the minister for that. It has also been posted to the Health Canada website. In other words it is on the Internet. I would just like assurances that it has been removed from there as well.

I accept the minister's apology and thank him for that.

The Speaker: Could the hon. Minister of Health address himself to the point on the website?

Hon. Allan Rock: Mr. Speaker, I will direct that it be removed from the website and put in the appropriate place.

The Speaker: Good. This matter is settled and I will not have to rule on it.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

JUSTICE

Ms. Eleni Bakopanos (Ahuntsic, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order to clarify an answer I gave yesterday to a question by the member for Wild Rose. May I be permitted to continue?

The Speaker: If it is clarification, it has to be very short. It is not debate so make the clarification now.

Ms. Eleni Bakopanos: Mr. Speaker, yesterday a question was raised by the member for Wild Rose regarding two cases involving sentencing of aboriginal offenders. I stated that these two cases were on appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada when in fact there are two other cases. There was confusion in terms of the cases that were before the supreme court under section 718.2(e). One of these cases, *R. v Gladue*, has been heard and is on reserve. The other, *R. v Wells*, also involves conditional sentencing and has not yet been heard.

I want to also put on record that the sentencing judges clearly stated that although they considered the offenders' aboriginal background, this was not a factor that affected the sentences that were ultimately imposed.

An hon. member: Shame.

The Speaker: Order, please. I think we have got to the point where the hon. member has made her clarification. The rest is debate.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY—FRESHWATER RESOURCES

The House resumed consideration of the motion and the amendment.

Mr. Clifford Lincoln (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Madam Speaker, of all the defining issues of the next century, indeed of the next millennium, water has to be the most important one.

● (1515)

As our pulse beats every 60 seconds we lose 50 hectares of forests around the globe. That means every year we are losing 30 million hectares of forests or well over twice the size of Nova Scotia. As a result the desert is gaining ground at the rate of 10 million hectares per annum or almost the size of Nova Scotia.

The environmental organization UNEP, United Nations Environmental Program, has shown through its statistics that if we were to add the desertified lands of the world together we would have a surface in deserts equal to North America and South America combined. This gives us an idea of the immensity of the water challenge.

Our forests are disappearing. The desert is gaining ground at an exponential rate. Our rivers are silting and drying up. Our groundwater is being depleted again at a huge rate. For all these reasons a country's water resources have become its most precious asset, its most valuable resource.

Many of us live under the comfortable but false assumption that our water resources are so immense as to be inexhaustible.

[Translation]

But it must be remembered that our freshwater resources represent only a fraction of the planet's total water resources. In fact, 97% or more of the planet's water resources are salt water. Only 3% are freshwater. And of these, the freshwater resources visible to us, our lakes, our rivers, the waterways that seem so never-ending to us, represent only a tiny proportion of the total freshwater resources, the great bulk of which lie beneath the earth's surface to form the water table.

The fact of the matter is that, in many American states today, particularly in the West and Southwest, the water table has been seriously depleted.

The more the water resources of certain American states dwindle, the more the U.S. has its eye on our resources in Canada. Certain companies, even in this country, see this as a golden business opportunity.

[English]

Thus pressure grows for Canada and its provinces to sell our water resources for commercial reasons and for profit. Those who would sell and buy our water resources would argue that we are blessed with water resources which are among the world's most prolific. This is true. Indeed the St. Lawrence and Great Lakes basin alone accounts for something like 20% of all surface fresh water of the globe.

I think we should put this in perspective. May I take the example of the same Great Lakes and St. Lawrence basin to show how much we use, overuse and abuse our water. Every day out of the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence we draw 655 billion gallons of water or 2.5 trillion litres of water. This is equivalent to putting water into 19 million jumbo tank cars each 65 feet long and with a capacity of 34,000 gallons. If we strung them together one after another they would stretch for 237,000 miles or 9.5 times around the earth at the Equator.

These mind-boggling statistics give us an idea of how much we have abused and used, day in and day out, the resources of just one water basin.

• (1520)

We should reiterate that of all our natural resources water is by far the most precious. I back the remarks of my colleague from Davenport that NAFTA has nothing to do with that. NAFTA provides for water in bottled form. We should not be constrained by ideas that we have to ask the Americans for permission to protect our water resources.

I congratulate the mover of the motion. We cannot at any price sacrifice our water resources for export whether on a large scale, medium scale or small scale. As parliamentarians and as Canadians we must send strong signals to the Americans and anybody else, to those who would sell our water for profit, to those who have grand designs for grand canals and small canals and bulk exports to make money, that our water and our water heritage are not for sale. They are not for sale at any price, not now, not tomorrow, not the day after, not the day after that or at any time thereafter.

This is why I agree with the motion. We must move without delay to protect our water resources. This is why I will support the motion when it comes to the vote.

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Madam Speaker, my question is for the hon. member and his colleague from Davenport for whom I have tremendous respect for their work on the environment committee.

He is saying that we do not have to be concerned over the NAFTA when it comes to bulk water shipments or sale of our water. We recently lost a court decision. Actually we did not lose it. In our perspective we caved in to the MMT decision and gave the

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Ethyl Corporation \$13.5 million U.S. We were unable to ban within our borders what is known as the manganese additive in gasoline which is a neurotoxin.

Is he and his party that confident in terms of the current court case in California against the British Columbia government? I am assuming from his projection that they will not be successful in the courts in suing British Columbia or the federal government in their prevention of bulk water shipments from British Columbia.

Mr. Clifford Lincoln: Madam Speaker, there is a very significant distinction between the MMT case as it was adjudicated in the internal provincial-federal trade tribunal. The gist of the case was the banning of interprovincial trade in MMT which was found by this particular tribunal to be invalid.

In the case of water it is very clear that this issue does not arise. It is also clear that NAFTA, as my colleague from Davenport underlined, does not refer to water except for bottled water. The very fact that it mentions bottled water and no other water means that the design or the intention of the drafters was not to cover other water resources than bottled water.

It would seem to be begging the question to try to introduce into NAFTA something that is not there in the first place. Also it is such a huge issue for us, far larger than any other, that we should move forward. We should produce legislation. We should challenge the Americans with the fact that this is our natural heritage. It is our water. They are our water resources. We have every right in the world to protect them and we will. I really believe our resolve should be there.

[Translation]

Mr. André Harvey (Chicoutimi, PC): Madam Speaker, I wish to congratulate our colleague, whom I had the pleasure of working with on the national marine park bill. His contribution was a constructive one.

• (1525)

I would like some clarification from him with respect to municipal, provincial and federal jurisdictions. As I see it, there is no issue more important to the province, the nation, or the continent than the issue of freshwater.

Would he comment on the issue of respecting jurisdictions? This is an issue that should lead to a very close partnership.

Mr. Clifford Lincoln: Madam Speaker, I could not agree more with the hon. member for Chicoutimi. In fact the gist of the motion is that the entire issue of protecting our water is one that naturally affects all jurisdictions.

One cannot think of water as coming under the jurisdiction of one government or another. All governments must work together, that is the meaning of the motion. My reading of the motion, which I support, is that there must be closer interaction between the

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provinces and the federal government. I think that all of the municipalities must be involved as well.

I am totally in agreement with the hon. member, that this must become a matter of the highest degree of partnership, and that is what the motion is all about.

[*English*]

Mrs. Karen Kraft Sloan (York North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, after a long period of drought no one can deny the feeling of exhilaration and renewal that a summer rain provides. I remember that as a small child wearing a light summer dress running along the street of my neighbourhood I was drenched while the rain came pouring down from the sky. The joy of the refreshing shower dances in my memory to this day.

As a child I grew up in Port Arthur, now part of the city of Thunder Bay, along the shores of the largest freshwater lake in the world, Lake Superior. At night snuggled deep under my covers I would listen to the fog horns guide the ships safely to and from the harbour. I would play on the beach and swim with my cousins in the chill bracing waters of Lake Superior. With my father and mother I would walk along the harbour and watch the sailboats zip along its chalky blue surface, their tiny white triangular sails filled with the full force of the wind.

Water is inextricably linked to all forces that create and sustain life. As human embryos begin and develop they are sheltered within the watery womb of their mothers. Water makes up 70% of our bodies.

Healthy economies depend on healthy potable water. We need clean water for agriculture to grow our food, to manufacture our goods, and to mine minerals and metals from the earth.

We need the waterways that are provided by this tremendous natural resource to ship the foods and goods we grow and make. Our waterways provide natural playgrounds throughout all of Canada's seasons to allow us to recreate and refresh ourselves, to play together as individuals, families and communities.

In my riding of York North, Lake Simcoe has provided economic, social, recreational and spiritual benefits to all people who have lived there on Simcoe's islands, along its shores and within its watershed. From the Chippewas of Georgina Island, the first nation who claimed this area as its ancestral homeland, to the most recent immigrants and visitors to Canada and to the area, Lake Simcoe is crucial to the future well-being of York North.

Some think that Canada has an overabundance of water. It is true that Canada has one-fifth of the world's freshwater. However, Canada's water must not be for sale. Water is a blessing and as a people Canadians are well blessed by our many natural resources. However we cannot take our natural heritage for granted.

We fall into the trap of thinking water is a renewable resource. We must never forget that only 1% of the waters of the Great Lakes are renewed each year. The other 99% was stored at the time of the last glacial melt 20,000 years ago and was gradually renewed over time.

Water is not a limitless resource. It is finite. We must not only conserve the amount of water used. We must also protect our water quality from contamination.

• (1530)

Worldwide water consumption is doubling every 20 years, more than two times the rate of increase in human population. Canadians at all levels must act to conserve water and reduce consumption.

Governments can provide leadership and incentive for businesses and individuals to use water more wisely through new production practices, recycling waste water, low flow toilets, et cetera. Toxics enter our aquatic ecosystem through land and airborne means, jeopardizing water quality.

Strong legislation to control toxic substances is crucial to ensure safe potable water for Canadians and for Canadian industries. Canada needs a federal sustainable water strategy.

The Canadian Environmental Law Association and the Great Lakes United, in their recent document "The Fate of the Great Lakes: Sustaining or Draining the Sweetwater Seas", have outlined a fundamental first step for preserving the Great Lakes basin. While this strategy deals with the Great Lakes basin, there are important insights for a federal water strategy.

The plan should include a water conservation strategy, plans to reduce the impacts of agriculture, the power industry and the mining industry on water levels and flows, guidelines for communities to live within water supplies available within their watershed and a determination of ways to avoid the negative impacts of privatizing water services, of free trade and of diversion.

Today members from many public interest groups are gathering in Ottawa. They have an event called water watch. It is a kick-off to a major initiative to raise awareness of water issues. I encourage all members of the House and Canadians watching today to follow this very important initiative.

Each level of government should adopt the strategy I just outlined in a way that makes it legally binding and by changing their laws, regulations and programs to ensure that the water strategy is carried out.

The motion before the House asks the government to place a moratorium on water exports and interbasin transfers and to bring in legislation that prohibits bulk freshwater exports and interbasin transfers in order to assert Canada's sovereign rights to protect, preserve and conserve our freshwater resources for future generations. I urge all members to support this motion.

Canadians expect their federal government to preserve our natural heritage. Depletion of water through use or by pollution is not acceptable. Water is not a commodity that can be sold to further a single economic interest.

Canada's water belongs to all of us. It is our responsibility to conserve it and protect it. It is our blessing to share as a people.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Guy Chrétien (Frontenac—Mégantic, BQ): Madam Speaker, in addition to living things, our ecosystem is made up of four non-living things, and these four must be shared by all of the living things on this planet.

These are, of course, the air, the water, the earth, and the sunlight. As far as air and sunlight are concerned, members will agree that there is not much we can do to control them. As proof of this, a disaster can occur in Russia, and we bear the consequences three or six months later here. That is what happened after the nuclear disaster at Chernobyl. The radioactivity spread to the Canadian north, where the animals were the victims of the disaster in the food chain.

We can, however, control the water and the earth. When my distinguished colleague says that Canada is the sole manager of its water, I beg to disagree. In the Chicoutimi region, ground water is part of a natural resource.

• (1535)

Natural resources, whether you like it or not, are a matter of provincial jurisdiction. They are not going to seize on today's motion and use the need to manage and share water as an excuse to appropriate another area of provincial jurisdiction.

I would like the member who sits on the Standing Committee on the Environment to be more specific on the management of the water table.

[*English*]

Mrs. Karen Kraft Sloan: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. Certainly the hon. member was a very active member of the standing committee on environment and sustainable development in the previous session of the House. I think it is important to note, as I outlined in my speech, that we have to think about the quantity of water we have to preserve and about the quality of water.

I talked about airborne pollutants and pollutants that come by other means. These pollutants and toxic substances enter into our ecosystems and they enter into our groundwater as well. As the hon. member well knows, there was a recent case at the supreme court which upheld the federal government's role in controlling

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toxic substances, that it was indeed a matter of federal jurisdiction. We all know as well informed members on both sides of the House that pollution knows no boundaries.

I suggest that if we want to ensure the quality of our groundwater to ensure that Canadians, whether it is in their homes or in their businesses or on their farms, have access to good quality water, water that is coming from the ground. Groundwater, as the hon. member has pointed out, is a responsibility of the federal government in that the federal government has by the Supreme Court of Canada clear jurisdiction in the area of managing toxic substances.

Hon. Charles Caccia (Davenport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I congratulate the member for her reply to the member for Charlevoix and also for her fine speech.

The member spoke about the importance of water quality. I wonder whether she would like to elaborate for a moment on her thoughts as to how the quality of water could be improved at the present time.

Mrs. Karen Kraft Sloan: Madam Speaker, in a recent study on environmental attitudes in a wide variety of countries it was very clear that the vast majority supported strong environmental legislation for the protection of our ecosystems and for the protection of our health.

It is not just in Canada that we have a group of enlightened citizenry but indeed globally citizens are enlightened.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): I am sorry, but the time has run out.

Ms. Bev Desjarlais (Churchill, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my hon. colleague from Vancouver East.

I am pleased to speak today on the motion by the New Democratic Party to ban the bulk export of our water. This issue is very important to me and to my constituents in the riding of Churchill and indeed to all Canadians.

One of Churchill's most important natural resources is its fresh water. My riding is known for its clear blue lakes and rivers. They are one of our best tourist attractions. Every year they draw thousands of campers, cottagers, hunters and fishers. The waters are also the lifeline of our commercial fishing industry.

The health of our lakes and rivers is the backbone of that important industry. Lakes and rivers are also extremely important to the way of life of my aboriginal constituents. They too understand the environmental damage that would result from the bulk export of our water.

I am very disappointed in the lack of action from the Liberal government to protect our freshwater up to this time. Its lack of

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action is what has prompted the New Democratic Party to bring forth this motion before the House.

• (1540)

It is not as though the Liberal government did not know this issue was coming. Last May the Minister for International Trade said: "Today's water is tomorrow's oil". We all know we can live without oil but we cannot live without water, and it is the telling tale of this government when it considers water as a commodity like oil rather than the vital element it is.

For years the government has been assuring Canadians that the North American Free Trade Agreement would not affect water. Now we see that these assurances are not holding true. An American company is suing through NAFTA because of a B.C. law that bans the bulk export of water. At least B.C. has a law to strike down. The Liberal government has done nothing at the federal level to protect our water. It has left B.C.'s New Democratic Party government to fight alone to protect Canada's freshwater.

The heart of this issue is whether we are to treat water as a market commodity. Some free market theologians argue that everything should be a commodity. We in the New Democratic Party have nothing against free markets. However, we believe there are things that belong outside the free market. There are things that society should make a conscious decision to deal with differently and not leave to the whims of the market.

I am sure most Canadians would agree with this. One good example of something that most Canadians think should not be on the free market commodity is drugs. To steal a line from film maker Michael Moore, if absolutely everything was a free market commodity, General Motors would sell crack. This seems like a funny and strange thing to say, but it shows that some things do not belong on the free market. Society has decided that drugs should not be available on the free market and government has made the laws to make that happen.

Another thing that Canadians do not want to see treated like a commodity is health care. All we have to do is look south of the border to see what a disaster it would be if we treated health care like something to be bought and sold. Millions of Americans do not have the security of health insurance. The American health care system also blows away the argument that the free market is always more efficient than a public system. Americans spend more per capita than Canadians on health care. Yet Canadians have universal coverage. Our public system of health care costs us less and covers the entire population. So much for the myth that free market is automatically more efficient.

Canadians rightly believe that health care is a right. It should be available to everyone, not only to those who can afford to pay for it on the free market. This is the principle that drove New Democrat

Party founder Tommy Douglas when, as premier of Saskatchewan, he introduced public health care to Canada.

We in the New Democratic Party believe that freshwater, like health care, should not be treated like a commodity. Like health care, water is a necessity of life. We all need it to survive. We use it to water our crops and raise the animals we eat. Comments like the trade minister's comparison of water to oil show that the government does not see it that way. The trade minister apparently thinks water is a commodity.

Removing large amounts of water from our ecosystem would be a disaster. It would damage our forests and our fish habitats. These habitats are vital to our tourism and our commercial fishing industries. On top of all that, we cannot predict how exporting large amounts of water from our ecosystem will affect our rain and weather patterns. If I were a farmer on the prairies I would be very concerned about this.

Our ecosystem cannot afford to lose those large amounts of water. If the government is sincere about wanting to protect our water and our environment, it will support our motion and it will move with great speed to initiate the required legislation. Canadians are tired of the government telling them our hands are tied by trade deals. We have seen a pattern of cave-ins from the government. It caved in on protecting Canadian magazines. It caved in on MMT.

Each time it points to the trade deals and says "it is not our fault, we have to obey our treaties. It is the government's fault. If our trade deals are to prevent the government from doing what is right for Canadians, then we should not be signing those deals. I am all in favour of trade deals but we should use some common sense and not sign deals that strip away power from our democratically elected governments. If this government will not stand up for Canada's sovereignty, it should move aside and let someone else.

Whenever I hear the Liberal government say we have to honour our trade deals, I cannot help but think about our treaties with the first nations, treaties that are as legitimate as the trade deals with other countries like the United States. I cannot help but notice the double standard. The Liberal government treats its treaties with foreign countries like they are carved in stone but feels free to ignore aboriginal treaties whenever it wants. It is interesting to note that our treaties with the first nations include rights and title to water resources, but it does not just apply on reserves and it applies to all traditional land use.

• (1545)

This motion is a chance for the government to do the right thing. It is a chance for it to stand up for the environment, a chance for it to say that water is the lifeblood of our environment and not a commodity to be sold. I urge my colleagues from all parties to support this motion which is so important for the future of Canada.

Supply

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Guy Chrétien (Frontenac—Mégantic, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the member for Churchill is firmly opposed to selling freshwater.

In my riding, there are a number of places that sell water. Obviously, it does not mean redirecting a river or emptying a lake, I agree. It is a natural resource. All the parties are satisfied, including the producer, that is, the owner of the farm where the water is drawn, and the companies that buy this water of exceptional quality. Everyone is happy in this market. And I do not think I am exaggerating.

What if the people of Alberta were asked, for example, to stop selling oil because it is not renewable—there is a limited quantity of oil in the subsoil and once that is used up there is no more—what if someone came up with a similar motion, whereby the sale or extraction of oil would be banned, and the oil would be kept for domestic use? I do not think that would be so intelligent, because we in the east import oil.

Some countries do not have enough water. We, it appears, have over 20% of the world's drinking water and we say "We are going to keep it just for us, regardless of what you might offer us". I remind you that while there is one extreme, there is another extreme too.

I wonder whether the member for Churchill could tell us how far we could go with her motion.

[English]

Ms. Bev Desjarlais: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the question. I do not think there is any question that the reasonableness of what happens with water in general is of concern here. We do not want to see the bulk export of water and large quantities of waters going outside their normal area. No one has ever argued that the sale of water in bottles should not take place.

What is really coming into question is the export of water to the point that we need something in place where we are not going to have a pipeline that brings water out of Canada to somewhere else. I was in Arizona during the break for a very short period of time and saw thousands of Canadians down enjoying the weather and also listened to those thousands of Canadians saying they are getting back up to Canada after because they know it will get too hot down there. They also commented on the way the water is being used there and how dried up the water is by the time it hits the Mexican border. If we take the approach that it is okay to send the water down to one area and use it all up, there will not be enough for everybody.

There is reasonableness out there. No one is saying that if people are dying of thirst somewhere that Canada is not going to help them out. That is not what we are talking about. We are talking about

using water as a money making, money grabbing way. We are talking about the owner of an area selling his water where he can make the most money, and for what. For someone to have an extra swimming pool. That is what we are talking about. We are talking about having water available for things that are not the necessities of life and they want the export of Canadian water to do so.

That Canadians would not be understanding if countries or people were in need of water would not happen. Canada is not that kind of country. We are saying that we need to protect the resources we have.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there is nothing in NAFTA that obliges Canada to take water from its natural state and convert it into a good.

• (1550)

Management of water is a shared responsibility between the provinces, territories and the federal government. The federal government has key responsibilities for boundary waters, primarily the Great Lakes, and for transboundary waters along the Canada-U.S. border. This is all under the aegis of the boundary waters treaty of 1909.

The government's position has been consistent. We stated our position in 1988 and stood by it in 1993. We stand by it today. The government has consulted with the provinces and the territories and we continue to work to protect our water. Would the member care to dispute any of those facts?

Ms. Bev Desjarlais: Madam Speaker, with regard to the NAFTA situation, I do not think we are absolutely comfortable that NAFTA would protect the water. There is no question that the government caved in on MMT. We did not wait for an absolute ruling to take place. It settled ahead of time. It has left Canadians feeling vulnerable to what could happen with water.

I do not want to wait until they say sorry, NAFTA does not protect your water. Why not put something in place to ensure that the water is protected? They have a lot more faith in that agreement with NAFTA than I have.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am very proud today to participate in the debate on the motion from the New Democratic Party. It is a very important motion, as a number of members have already noted.

The motion calls on the House to place an immediate moratorium on the export of bulk freshwater shipments and to assert Canada's sovereign right to protect, preserve and conserve our freshwater resources for future generations. This is something that obviously is very significant. It is important that it be debated in the House.

Listening to the comments of my colleague in the NDP from Churchill and understanding that in her constituency of northern

Supply

Manitoba, water as a resource, as a way of life, as a part of the environment, as part of the history of that province, is very important.

I represent a very urban riding. Water does not pop up on the agenda every day. I deal with issues of drug abuse and homelessness and poverty. Yet when I talk to constituents in my riding of Vancouver East about the importance of having a sense of national purpose around the very precious resource of water, there would be very strong agreement.

I am certainly not an expert in this area and many of us in the House are not experts. However, we fundamentally understand as Canadians that one of the things that makes this country very great and one of the things we are very proud of is our natural environment.

As Canadians we have a very strong sense that one of the purposes and roles of our federal government is to preserve and protect the natural resources we have been endowed with. We are the custodians of those resources for future generations.

That is why the motion before us today is very important. It is here to be debated because regrettably we do not have a national policy about the protection of this resource. That is why we are here debating this motion today.

We have certainly heard from members opposite, from the Liberal government. We have heard many debates, many promises, many campaign slogans that water as a natural resource is something that will be protected by legislation and by national policy.

We have yet to see that happen. I think it is a real tragedy. I hope today in debating this motion there will be an acknowledgement and a recognition that this issue is now very critical.

In my province of British Columbia I am very proud that we have had a provincial government with the courage to enact legislation to protect water as a very precious resource. That legislation is being challenged by a foreign corporation under NAFTA which is now claiming damages in the order of \$300 million from the B.C. government.

On the one hand, it is very important for us as parliamentarians and as policy makers to make it very clear that we do agree there should be national legislation, that there should be a moratorium as an immediate measure to prevent the bulk export of freshwater from Canada to other places.

• (1555)

But we also need to take action to show that we support that legislation in British Columbia. It is something we need to have right across the country. We have already heard in debate today that different promises have different kinds of policies around this question.

In the New Democratic Party we are saying this issue goes to the very heart of what it means to be a sovereign nation. It goes to the very heart of what it means for democratically elected governments to be able to enact public policies around issues like health care or the management and protection of water. That is what this debate is about today.

I think Canadians would agree that we cannot afford to continue along a direction where basically water is up for grabs in this country where under different situations provincially we may have various licences that are handed out, we may have bulk export and it becomes something that a province may or may not pass legislation about.

We need leadership from the House. We need leadership from the federal government to make it very clear that there is a commitment to put into place what has been stated so many times. There is a public consciousness about this issue.

The Council of Canadians, which has a very broad and diverse network and membership across Canada, has made this one of its key issues. In its recent *Canadian Perspectives* there is a very good article entitled "Our Water's Not for Sale" by Maude Barlow:

Before this goes any further, we need a public debate in Canada. I believe that water is a public trust. It belongs to the people. No one has the right to appropriate it or profit from it at someone else's expense. An adequate supply of clean water for people's daily living needs is a basic human right and is best protected by maintaining control of water in the public sector.

I wholeheartedly agree with those comments and call on the government to basically bring in that legislation that has been promised.

I hope this will be a unanimous vote in the House of Commons today. I have heard debate from all sides of the House and I think we understand the importance of this issue. We need to unite on this issue, represent the interests of Canadians and protect the future of our environment and say that we are willing to stand up for this resource and not just see it treated as a good or commodity that can be traded away for vast profits.

We must take the honourable course and say there is a public interest here that overrides private interests. The public interest is that we have to protect that water resource.

I urge all members of the House to basically support this motion and for Liberal members to ask themselves why their government has not brought forward the legislation and see this motion as a first step to a real commitment to take the legislative steps necessary to make this motion a reality in terms of protecting this resource. I urge all members to support the motion.

[Translation]

Ms. Jocelyne Girard-Bujold (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, I think the hon. member of the New Democratic Party is right to

say that the federal government was all talk in the past. It has been all talk and no action with respect to the export of drinking water. Nothing has been done to protect the quality of our water, this vital resource for humanity.

That is what I am so uneasy about in the NDP motion before the House today. After all is said and done, this government has indeed done nothing. Some provinces, like British Columbia, passed legislation on water exports. Others have seen to it that anything having to do with their freshwater or drinking water requires legislation to be passed; this way they are in control. This motion would be putting in this government's hands Canada's sovereign right to protect, preserve and conserve our freshwater resources for future generations.

• (1600)

I am sorry but I think that what this motion is saying right now is "You the provinces have done what you had to do; now that the bandwagon is on the move, let the Canadian government jump on and take over everything you have done".

I do hope that is not the intent, but that is how I interpret it.

[*English*]

Ms. Libby Davies: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her comments and her question.

I want to point out the intent of the motion presented by New Democratic Party. Very clearly the motion is calling on the government, in co-operation with the provinces, to place an immediate moratorium on the export of bulk freshwater shipments, et cetera. I think we are very mindful of the fact that in this day and age we need to develop an approach to federalism that is co-operative and responsive to provincial needs. That is why the motion was written in that way.

I do not think the motion has been brought forward because all of a sudden we have noticed there is a problem. This has been an issue of public debate for a very long time. There are environmental groups, organizations, individuals and even members of the Liberal cause, as well as other members of the House, who have campaigned to ensure there is a sense of national purpose around the preservation of this precious resource. This motion has not suddenly popped up on us today.

However, I would point out that there is a very critical situation in B.C. because of claims being made by Sun Belt, which is, in effect, taking on the B.C. government. It is very important that the response to that be based on what is our national policy. Unfortunately we do not have one. It is very important to have that so it is not one province at a time which is trying to take on this issue.

Supply

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member will know that the Sun Belt case is not about our right to manage Canadian waters.

I have a brief question for the member. She probably is aware that the government does not support the bulk selling of water and that in fact the motion states support for the existing government policy with regard to the export of water.

Is the member suggesting that this motion is to reaffirm a position which this government has already taken?

Ms. Libby Davies: Madam Speaker, first of all, the issue involving Sun Belt is about dealing with this resource and managing it in terms of the public interest. It raises very serious questions about the kinds of trade deals we have signed, like the NAFTA, which place in jeopardy our ability to have a public policy around these issues. Therefore I would disagree with the member's assumption.

In terms of it already being policy, I think that begs the question: If it is already in place and operable, then why do we have these kinds of situations developing? The fact is, there is no national legislation, and legislation has been promised by the Liberal government.

If the member believes that it is already in place, then I would assume he would enthusiastically support the motion and carry it further to ensure the legislation comes forward.

Mr. John McKay (Scarborough East, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this motion.

Recently I had the occasion to be in Washington. While there, I and some of my colleagues had the opportunity to speak with Ambassador Chrétien about this particular subject. His comments were quite interesting.

• (1605)

He made the point, which I thought was very valid, that in some states in the United States a litre of water is actually more expensive than a litre of gasoline.

When we talk about water we get into all kinds of emotional conversations about nationalism and how precious this resource is and things of that nature, but I think the point the ambassador was making was that water has already been reduced to being a commodity. It is a commodity with a price. It is a commodity that can be bought and sold, and the pressure for it to be a commodity will ever increase upon us.

The irony is that a litre of gasoline or coal, or oil for that matter, is a litre of product that is dug up, transported and consumed, much like a litre of water can be transported and consumed. Therefore the question becomes: What is the significant difference between a litre of water and a litre of any other product?

Supply

As other speakers have alluded to over the course of the debate, the real difference is that a litre of water is something on which life depends. Therein lies the distinction between a litre of another resource based product, a product that is dug up, transported and consumed, and this particular product.

I want to continue to emphasize the point that water is a commodity that will continue to be subject to trade disputes and that it is a limited resource.

In Canada we live under some illusions. We occupy something in the order of 7% of the world's land mass and we have about 9% of the world's freshwater resources. That would be good if we stopped there, but of that 9%, 60% drains north, while 90% of our population is south. Therefore, 90% of our population has access to only about 40% of our water.

Given the population spread and the concentration of our population that should be adequate. But, arguably, we are not a water resource rich country. We have more water resources than do many countries; nevertheless, we do not have water to squander. We do not have water to give away. We do not have water to use in a way that would be an improper stewardship of the resource.

How should we, as a House, respond to the resolution that is before us? It states:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should, in co-operation with the provinces, place an immediate moratorium on the export of bulk freshwater shipments and inter-basin transfers and should introduce legislation to prohibit bulk freshwater exports and inter-basin transfers and should not be a party to any international agreement that compels us to export freshwater against our will in order to assert Canada's sovereign right to protect, preserve and conserve our freshwater resources for future generations.

I would refer my hon. colleagues on the government side to the joint statement made by the governments of Canada, the United States and Mexico following the NAFTA in 1993, which reads:

Unless water in any form has entered into commerce or become a good or product, it is not a good or product covered by any trade agreement, including the NAFTA.

Nothing in the NAFTA would oblige any NAFTA party to either exploit its water for commercial use or begin exporting water in any form, and I emphasize "in any form". The thrust of the resolution, as I understand it, is that it is with respect to bulk transfers.

The joint statement goes on to affirm that Canada and every NAFTA partner has sovereignty over their water.

Water in its natural state—in lakes, rivers, reservoirs, aquifers, water basins and the like—is not a good or a product, and that is critical phraseology with respect to these trade agreements. It is not a good or a product. It is not traded. Therefore it is not and has never been subject to the terms of any trade agreement. Nothing forces us to export water in bulk.

• (1610)

I suppose the distinction is that water is a resource on which all life depends. Therefore it is a resource that is significantly different than other resources.

I refer to the text of the NAFTA, but I also refer to the fact that this is an area of joint jurisdiction. Usually at this point in my speeches I tend to beat up on the Government of Ontario because I profoundly disagree with the attitude of that government in many areas. But in this particular case I think the Government of Ontario is moving in the right direction.

Initially it had a bit of a brain cramp. It issued an export license with respect to what is known as the Nova project. It was prepared to export water and saw nothing wrong with doing that.

However, quite a number of people saw something wrong with it. Representatives from the United States governments, both at the state and federal levels, saw something wrong with it. Many federal members as well saw something wrong with it.

Initially and immediately the Ontario government revoked its license. It has entered into a public process to review how licenses are to be granted pursuant to the Ontario Water Resources Act, which states "The purpose of this regulation is to provide for the conservation, protection and wise use and management of Ontario's surface water because Ontario's water resources are essential to the long term environmental, social and economic well-being of Ontario".

It goes on in article 3 to talk about the considerations that a regulator is to enter into with respect to export licenses. These are the issues: protection of the natural functions of the ecosystem; private domestic uses; livestock and other uses; municipal water supplies; groundwater that may affect or be affected by the proposed surface taking; other existing and planned uses; whether it is in the public interest to grant the permit; and such other matters that seem expedient to the director.

In my view, those are intelligent regulations which need and deserve the support of this House and this government. The resolution of the Government of Ontario is worth supporting, which is something that I frankly thought I would never say in the House.

Canada is not a party to any agreement which compels it to export water in bulk. It is not a party to any agreement in the NAFTA. It is not party to any agreement outside of the NAFTA. In fact in the joint management provisions under the International Joint Commission, the reference that that body acts in the best interests of the basin, as opposed to the best interests of each individual country or jurisdiction, is an area that is well protected.

Supply

Ontario has done something which is quite clever. It has entered into the protection of the watershed area. That, in and of itself, takes it out of the trade jurisdiction.

In summary, water is a product. The pressure is building. It will continue to be a product and we need to be wise stewards. Jurisdictional initiatives on the part of the federal government and on the part of the provincial governments are, in my view, wise initiatives.

• (1615)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Guy Chrétien (Frontenac—Mégantic, BQ): Madam Speaker, Lavoisier, the great 16th century scholar, brought us the principle of the conservation of matter. There is a set amount of water on the planet and this amount does not change.

Earlier, my colleague, the member for Chicoutimi, reminded me of the floods in the Saguenay region and in Manitoba. The fact that it rained heavily in these two places does not mean that there is more water on the planet. If more rain falls in Chicoutimi one year, less will fall in Washington, Tel Aviv or Paris the following year.

The planet's resources in water—or ice, of course—x number of years ago are the same resources it will have x number of years from now. This is known as the water cycle, and we have Lavoisier to thank for our understanding of it.

I have a question for the member for Scarborough East and I will use Newfoundland as an example, rather than Quebec. I am sure the member has seen Churchill Falls. The number of cubic metres of water that go over it per second is mind-boggling. Newfoundland could fill a huge ship with containers of water and sell it somewhere like New York. It is said that, in that city, a litre of water costs more than a litre of gas. Newfoundland could make a lot of money that way. It would be more lucrative to sell water than oil.

If we are to believe what we are hearing, Newfoundland will not have this opportunity. If not just a truckload, but a whole boatload of water is removed from the Churchill River as it flows to the Atlantic Ocean, nothing is lost and the water will eventually return to the Atlantic Ocean via New York, because of the principle of the conservation of matter.

Obviously, I too will object to major changes in the courses of rivers or to draining lakes dry, but when we look at examples as simple as these, I do not see why the sale of water in containers would be prohibited when, in fact, it does not deplete the ecosystem in any way.

[*English*]

Mr. John McKay: Madam Speaker, the hon. member's question has a certain logic to it which needs to be addressed in an

unemotional and logical way. It is true that the volume of water remains constant in the environment. It may be placed here or placed there or misplaced or misused.

The response to the question as to why not, that if the people of Newfoundland can make a bit of money what is the harm, is another law of physics which is for every action there is an equal opposite reaction. I do not think we are at the point where we can remove water in bulk and not expect an ecosystem reaction of some kind or another.

The Ontario government's regulation in this area is wise. It deals with the entire watershed, the entire basin, and how all the streams, rivers and lakes, et cetera, are impacted with respect to the removal of water in bulk.

I think that is the response to his very logic question. In principle there should be no good reason but there inevitably has to be a reaction of some kind once water is continuously removed in bulk. It is not as if the boat backs up and takes it once. It is there time after time after time.

Hon. Christine Stewart (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to participate in the debate today. Parliament needs to debate important national issues, and certainly the debate today on freshwater is such an issue.

Water is very important to all of us. In Canada we must learn how to care for this resource. Freshwater, a primal resource, has always been valued highly throughout history and has often been referred to as the font of life. Water is a substance of great spiritual and sacramental significance for Christians and for those of many other faiths and beliefs.

• (1620)

Freshwater sustains our life and health on a daily basis. We depend upon water for food production, transportation, commercial purposes, recreation and tourism. The sight, sound, feel and taste of clean water nourish our sense of well-being.

For Canadians freshwater has important real and symbolic value. Nine per cent of the world's renewable freshwater resources and twenty per cent of the world's freshwater resources including waters captured in glaciers and polar ice caps are found within Canada. We are proud of our beautiful lakes, our powerful rivers and waterfalls and the majesty of our natural heritage which frames our water resources.

Yet even in Canada our abundant water supplies are vulnerable on a daily basis to a host of outside influences and activities. These range from inadequate waste water treatment to hydro electric generation, industrial activities, pollution and the effects of climate change, cycles of flood or drought that have devastating impacts on people's lives. As well, how we as individuals treat our freshwater resources is an issue for consideration.

Supply

Canadians rank second in the world for their per capita water consumption and yet pay for only half the cost of water supply. Over the next 10 years costs for maintaining this infrastructure in Canada are estimated to be \$40 billion to \$70 billion. Therefore we as custodians of freshwater must manage this resource wisely not only for today but for our grandchildren.

The federal government is leading several initiatives to restore, conserve and protect major Canadian watersheds. Current initiatives are focusing on the St. Lawrence River, the Great Lakes, the Fraser River and Georgia Basin, the Atlantic coastal action plan and the northern rivers ecosystem initiative in Alberta and the Northwest Territories.

A study of the northern river basin has provided information on the cumulative impact of development of the Peace, Athabasca and Slave rivers. The new northern ecosystem initiative is in the design phase and will focus on Canada's Arctic regions.

These initiatives are built on the principle that we cannot manage water simply on a resource or sector basis. We must take an integrated ecosystem approach that looks at the full range of pressures affecting both water quality and quantity.

Each of these initiatives addresses specific regional needs and priorities in each watershed, promotes partnerships that involve all sectors and encourages community involvement. Each results in the development of basin-wide action plans to resolve complex environmental issues, particularly deteriorating water quality that threatens human and environmental health in these areas.

Through these programs we have seen a 96% reduction in toxic effluent discharges by 50 major industrial plants along the St. Lawrence, reductions in contaminant levels of targeted pollutants in the Great Lakes, clean-up of contaminated harbours such as Collingwood harbour, the implementation of best practices and pollution prevention plans in many businesses and industries along the Fraser River.

[*Translation*]

Watersheds include much more than lakes or rivers. They are complete ecosystems in which the waters are drained toward a common waterway or drainage basin. A single watershed, such as the Great Lakes, can include a large segment of the Canadian landscape because, in addition to the lakes themselves, it includes all the waterways and their tributary streams.

Whether it is through a channel, by ship, by water tanker truck, or through a water system, the removal of large volumes of water from a watershed has a direct and major impact on water resources and the environment.

Bulk removal can adversely affect the quality of a watershed. It is important to better understand the immediate and cumulative

effects of such removal, and to know how to improve the management of our freshwater resources. By contrast, the taking of small volumes of water for the purpose of bottling that water does not have the same adverse effect.

[*English*]

Major water extraction may change the environment, altering the habitats of native species and possibly introducing new exotic species not normally found in that ecosystem. These changes to the ecosystem could also impact on how people live and work. Water resources everywhere face growing pressure from urbanization, industrial activities and the sheer growth in the number of people on the face of the earth.

• (1625)

Climate change affects how much water is available and determines water quality. Because it is a renewable resource water is vulnerable to the potential effects of climate change and variability. We have already seen what happens to water resources when there is not enough rain or average temperatures increase over an extended period.

Recently we have seen the flow rate of the Ottawa River which feeds the St. Lawrence Seaway drop 50% below normal levels due to unusually warm weather last fall. At the port of Montreal water levels dropped to 30 year lows. The impact on river transportation was immediate.

Just before Christmas the Ottawa *Citizen* reported that the shipping industry was losing over \$1 million per week in freight rates.

[*Translation*]

How can we prepare for an impact that has yet to be fully measured? The answer is through research. Water is a major issue that transcends science, the possible impact and the adaptation of the climate change action fund.

This fund, which was announced in the 1998 federal budget, shows the federal government's firm commitment to support research on our country's water resources. In each of the next three years, \$50 million will be allocated to the fund.

That fund will help us better understand the basic scientific data that will support a sound and inclusive process to develop the national implementation strategy. This information will help individuals participate in the national effort to think globally and to act locally. This initiative will speed up the development and implementation of a greater number of technologies that are respectful of the climate.

[*English*]

Concern over freshwater led to the development of a federal water policy more than a decade ago. The time has come to update

Supply

it and include the full range of issues which threaten our watershed, one of which is the bulk removal of water.

There is a host of other programs and strategies in play ranging from ways to improve water quality in the St. Lawrence River basin, the Fraser River and the Great Lakes to local grassroots initiatives.

To address the issue adequately there must be more co-ordinated national action on water. Internationally the federal government has responsibility for foreign affairs that relate to water such as the International Boundary Waters Treaty Act. Domestically the federal government has a large role in fisheries, navigation and water on federal lands.

The provinces have primary responsibility for water management within their borders.

[*Translation*]

This ecologically oriented approach is what underlies our approach to environmental strategies. This essentially holistic approach is more effective because it focusses on causes, not symptoms.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs and I will describe the main thrusts of a new strategy aimed at protecting and managing Canadian hydrographic basins.

Along with the provinces and territories, we shall address the main issues relating to water in Canada. Along with our American neighbour, we shall address problems affecting boundary waters, through the International Joint Commission.

Canada does not export huge quantities of freshwater at the present time, but in recent years there have been a number of proposals relating to exports of large quantities of water, via pipeline, tanker or diversion canal.

[*English*]

These ideas have supporters in some areas because they say we have an abundance of water. The fact is we do not have enough scientific and technical information on the long term effects of such withdrawals either on an individual basis or cumulatively.

The elemental nature of water requires a comprehensive approach and one that is based on co-operative stewardship if it is to be protected and well managed. To do anything less would fail to provide Canadians with the assurance that our watersheds are protected for our children and future generations.

• (1630)

I believe that collectively Canadians share a strong desire to manage and protect our watersheds and that all jurisdictions in Canada can work together co-operatively to prohibit the bulk removal of fresh water and interbasin transfers, including water for

export, in order to assert Canada's sovereign right to protect, preserve and conserve our freshwater resources for future generations.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): I am afraid I must interrupt the minister. The time has expired.

Mr. John Duncan (Vancouver Island North, Ref.): Madam Speaker, my question is very brief. Does the government consultation with the provinces have all-province consensus on bulk water exports?

Hon. Christine Stewart: Madam Speaker, the consultation with the provinces has taken place over the last several months on the part of officials in my department and myself in meetings with my environment counterparts. The discussion has been thorough.

The concern from coast to coast is mutual and we do see the need to study, analyse and protect our freshwater resources and make sure we have the capacity to prevent the withdrawal of bulk water.

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, perhaps the minister could indicate a couple of things. She talked about consultation with the provinces. Has there been a dimension to this exercise that her department has been going through in terms of consulting with aboriginal people who have an obvious interest, many of them in water resources?

Second, is the minister saying to the House that government members intend to support the motion, in particular the main motion?

Hon. Christine Stewart: Madam Speaker, I was not able to conclude my remarks but my last statement was to be that the government and I support this motion.

To answer the hon. member's previous question, yes, it is the practice of my department. I have asked that my department on every occasion possible consult with aboriginal peoples as we develop our policies.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Guy Chrétien (Frontenac—Mégantic, BQ): Madam Speaker, in the Minister of the Environment's speech, she spoke of a number of past or present proposals relating to the bulk sale or purchase of freshwater.

Could the minister tell us more about these proposals?

[*English*]

Hon. Christine Stewart: Madam Speaker, I think the member is aware of a few of the proposals that have been very public over the last part of the year, in particular the Nova request to withdraw water from Lake Superior. There is also a request by a company to withdraw water in Newfoundland. There was a request to withdraw water from B.C.

Supply

Since our discussions have begun several provinces have taken action to put in place laws, regulations and policies with regard to the extraction of bulk water from their provinces.

So there is a lot of work together in light of the growing concern that we may see yet more requests for withdrawals. If we do not have policies, regulations and legislation that can protect us, it could get out of hand.

Ms. Louise Hardy (Yukon, NDP): Madam Speaker, I was pleased to hear the minister's reference to the Arctic. I do not know if she has been there but the Arctic is really very lush and quite stunning with the amount of water.

• (1635)

The Gwich'in refer to water in their name, Gwich'in. The territories have a different standing in our Constitution which heightens their vulnerability to exploitation, plus the fact that there is not a high number of people there to object.

I would like the minister to reaffirm the protection she is stating toward the people and the land and water in the north.

Hon. Christine Stewart: Madam Speaker, the federal government is conscious of the enormous resources in fresh water that do occur in the far north of our country and the concern of people who live in the north for their freshwater.

The federal government is in the process of providing the same capacity to the territories to regulate and control waters within their territories as the provinces now have.

Mr. Myron Thompson: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I understand the time is going to lapse for the minister in questions, but because she is the minister and we seldom have the opportunity to question individuals on these issues, I would ask for unanimous consent to extend question time for her for a period of five or ten minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): Is there unanimous consent to extend the period of questions for five minutes?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester, transport; the hon. member for New Brunswick Southwest, highways.

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Harvey (Chicoutimi, PC): Madam Speaker, I would first like to say that our party will be supporting this motion, not

because we find it a rigorous or well defined motion but rather because we find it a motion that sounds a sort of alarm with regard to freshwater.

The main point of the motion is simply to act to ensure that throughout Canada there is an effective freshwater management plan.

What is a little hard to accept is the fact that the NDP motion gives us the impression that life starts today only. I would point out to my NDP colleagues that considerable effort has been made in recent decades—not 100 years ago, but in recent decades—because that is a fact. Parliamentarians, like their fellow citizens, evolve at a normal rate. Problems arise, we become aware of them and we develop ways to resolve them.

The current government and the previous governments acted to protect flora and fauna, for example with the acid rain treaty. We realized that massive destruction was going on. The agreement was signed by the previous government, and I think it was effective. Sometimes we forget too easily.

In the area of the St. Lawrence action plan, I can tell members that tens of millions of dollars have been invested to protect our waterways, particularly the Saguenay fjord, where whole pockets of shrimp have been flooded with industrial waste. Some changes take place slowly, but at an acceptable rate.

I do not think we should address this motion as one that is dogmatic and that will make everything better. No, indeed. The issue requires realistic treatment. Things were done in the past.

Our NDP colleagues put everything in terms of the free trade agreement. People have spoken today confirming that the agreement protects this aspect, protects our country against massive exports of freshwater.

• (1640)

I will quote later from the speech that was made at the time on the protection afforded freshwater by the FTA and NAFTA.

This proposal is also somewhat petty and lacking in solidarity. Freshwater is Canadian property and international property as well. My colleague from Frontenac—Mégantic referred earlier to the whole commercial aspect of renewable resources. I think we must devise a work plan for efficient management, "in co-operation with the provinces", as the motion states, I might add.

It is important that commercialization not be excluded from the word go. We can never tell what the future holds. At present, there are situations which we feel could potentially take on dramatic proportions around the world. In the early stages of developing a management plan, one cannot say "We are closing the door

completely on providing any support to countries where there is a clear lack of other resources”.

Will the technology ever be developed to take salt out of seawater? Maybe, maybe not.

We must put in place an efficient management plan. That is what makes me say that there can be no jurisdiction. This is an objective we must set for ourselves as a nation, in fact as a continent. Nothing more clearly transcends municipal, provincial, national and continental jurisdictions than the introduction of a plan that will help us improve management of our resources on a large scale.

Large-scale plans are fine but, as a general rule, this calls for effective municipal action. I remember the water purification program of the 1980s. Unfortunately, for a variety of reasons, many municipalities in Quebec were denied the benefits of the national water purification program, but there is no doubt about the importance of having such a plan in our municipalities, however costly or technically challenging. Furthermore, it has not yet been completed.

We must approve this motion for its very laudable goal of having all levels of government work together to implement something sensible and intelligent, without closing the door to continental or international exchanges of assistance, because one never knows what the future holds in store.

It is also important that the government be able to react positively to this issue, because major changes are under way. Right now, we are not in a position to forecast future climatic changes. These changes are apparently happening faster than anticipated. This is therefore one more reason to urge the government to take rapid action in a sector that we feel is vital to our future.

It is my hope that, as was the case for the St. Lawrence action plan and the creation of a marine national park in my region, among other initiatives, the development of a national, provincial and even continental plan can take place without any bickering, since this would only make us waste time. I have often seen a lot of time being wasted during federal-provincial negotiations. In the end, the losers are our fellow citizens.

I was pleased to see government members confirm that both the FTA and NAFTA guarantee total protection against bulk exports of freshwater. Indeed, I was pleased to see this confirmation from government members, since they voted against free trade at the time.

• (1645)

The 1988 election campaign was run on that issue. The Liberals claimed that the Americans would come and take all the water from our lakes. It was going to be terrible. Yet, at the time, we had confirmation that freshwater exports in very small containers were the only thing that had been agreed to during the negotiations.

Supply

This shows that demagoguery often rules in politics. We must live with that reality. Over the middle and the long term, history eventually vindicated those who negotiated that agreement in good faith.

I have a quote that shows the position taken at that time. It is from Mr. Wilson, the Minister of Industry, Science and Technology and Minister of Foreign Trade, who said “Permit me to repeat what the free trade agreement expressly provides, and which will also go for the North American free trade agreement as well. It is clearly understood that neither this nor the agreement applies to water, meaning surface and underground water”.

He continued “What I said in my initial response describes the position and the policy of the Government of Canada with respect to the export of water. Water may be exported in bottles. Bulk export of water, especially the diversion of waterways, is not”. It was clear at the time.

In short, we will support this motion, which is a motion of principle sounding an alarm on the importance of having a management plan, in co-operation with all other levels of government, and I thank my colleagues for putting it to the House.

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member from the Conservative Party for his support for the NDP motion.

If he believes that NAFTA protects bulk water shipments and Canada’s sovereign right over water, why does he believe then that the United States, especially the state of California, has launched a \$220 million lawsuit against the province of British Columbia? The province has forbidden bulk water tanker shipments.

I refer again to the MMT case in which Canada capitulated and gave \$13.5 million U.S. to a foreign national and maintained the gasoline additive MMT, which is a neurotoxin, within our borders. I suspect that the state of California and the companies that are there suspect they may have a legal loophole or a legal avenue in which to approach or sue the Government of Canada.

I want to ensure, from his way of thinking, that they would not have a legal approach and that they are basically blowing hot air.

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Harvey: Madam Speaker, the free trade agreement was signed; the North American free trade agreement was signed. There is a tribunal to provide dispute arbitration. As far as I know, the trade agreement exists. In the past ten years, as far as I know, James Bay and the Great Lakes have not been moved to Las Vegas.

Supply

We must look to the future. We had legal guarantees in the agreement. Now, in the spirit of the motion, it is vital Canada do everything possible to create an effective plan to manage freshwater. It is a finite resource.

We must not forget it represents 3% of all the planet's reserves. That means that we have about one quarter of one per cent of these reserves. It warrants effective management, but it must be management in consultation with local governments, both municipal and provincial, and the federal government, which has the vital job of co-ordinator.

Nothing moves like water. It transcends jurisdictions and we call on the goodwill of all involved.

Mr. Jean-Guy Chrétiens (Frontenac—Mégantic, BQ): Madam Speaker, speaking of comparisons, I would like to remind my hon. colleague from Chicoutimi that, if one compares the planet to a grapefruit, a single seed would be the equivalent of all the water there is on the planet, just one seed. That is not much, compared to a whole grapefruit.

Of that amount, 98% is salt water, and only 2% fresh. Of that 2% freshwater, 20% is located in Canada, and a very large proportion of that in Quebec.

• (1650)

The hon. member for Chicoutimi said he agrees with the NDP motion, because it is a matter of principle, and because we must take care of our water, which is a vital resource. Everyone agrees with that.

I would, however, ask the hon. member for Chicoutimi whether he would be in agreement to the extent of seeing areas of provincial jurisdiction, including that of Quebec—he being a Quebec MP—encroached upon, in order to comply with the motion by the NDP. I await the response of my colleague and friend from Chicoutimi.

Mr. André Harvey: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Frontenac—Mégantic, who always has highly pertinent questions, and whom I have the pleasure of seeing in the House on a daily basis.

Concerning this question, yes indeed, I see that as inevitable, since this matter, in the framework of negotiations, while honouring the respective jurisdictions of the various levels of government, calls upon common sense as well as upon a concept very dear to the heart of my colleagues of the Bloc Québécois, the concept of partnership for attaining objectives of importance to our people.

This is the spirit in which all governments must pool their efforts in order to find a global solution. This affects not only the riding of Chicoutimi, but the riding of Frontenac—Mégantic as well, not

only just Quebec or Ontario, but all Canadians, and all the people who live on this planet.

We must, therefore, speak to each other. There is nothing on this earth that brings out interdependency more than anything to do with the environment. I believe that a healthy dose of common sense is needed if we are to come up with any worthwhile results.

[English]

Mr. Bryon Wilfert (Oak Ridges, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I welcome the attention being paid today to protecting Canada's freshwater resources. I am also very pleased that this concern extends beyond potential trade of our water resources. I refer more broadly to how we manage our watersheds and specifically to the need to prevent transfers of water between drainage basins or watersheds.

Indeed the watershed is recognized as the fundamental ecological unit in protecting and conserving our water resources. Bulk transfer or removal of water, whether for use elsewhere in Canada or for export purposes, could potentially have a significant impact on the health and integrity of our watersheds. It is important that Canadians work together to ensure that we take a comprehensive and environmentally sound approach to protect our resources and our watersheds.

Water is an essential part of all ecosystems, from the functions and life support provided by lakes, rivers and streams to the role of the hydrological cycle in sustaining water in its various forms.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): I have to interrupt the hon. member. I am afraid I have made a mistake. I had not seen the hon. member of the Conservative Party and it was his turn to speak. If you do not mind, he has 10 minutes and then we will carry on.

The hon. member for Kings—Hants, my apologies.

Mr. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, PC): Madam Speaker, we understand the occasional mistake and that is fair.

My apologies to the hon. member from the Liberal Party for he unwittingly was taking the space of a Conservative, which they seem to have done a lot of since 1993. That being the case, that will not always be the case so they can enjoy their time in the sun at this juncture.

The issue and the motion before us is one of critical importance. It is very positive that the New Democrats have brought forward this motion for an important debate today and for an important debate in the future on the issue of water and more specifically on bulk freshwater exports.

I have some concern about the motion upon first glance. I will quote the motion specifically. It recommends that the government

“should introduce legislation to prohibit bulk freshwater exports and interbasin transfers”.

• (1655)

I would support and our party is supporting this motion. We want to ensure that a debate on this very important topic occurs here in the House of Commons.

We believe that the government should introduce legislation such that there can be a debate in the House of Commons on this issue, a full debate that can delve into this extremely serious issue. That being the case, I think we all need more information before we would necessarily support in the future the legislation which the government brings forward in terms of prohibiting bulk freshwater exports and interbasin transfers.

We will be supporting the motion today because of the importance of this debate. That being the case, if and when the legislation is actually brought forward, we would appreciate the opportunity to debate fully the pros and cons of the legislation.

It was noted earlier, and it is very important to recognize, that the PC Party did in the NAFTA negotiations move to protect freshwater. During an earlier exchange between my hon. colleague from the New Democratic Party and a member from my party, some questions were raised as to the sanctity of water and the protection of water under NAFTA.

The fact is that trade agreements and trade negotiations are ongoing. This is not a static process. A trade agreement is not reached and then that is the end of it. An ongoing process of negotiation and discussion occurs, not just between countries, but between subnational governments within a sovereign state like Canada. That is an important issue which has to be discussed more fully within this House once the legislation is brought forward. We have to discuss the jurisdictional authority over water within Canada and the roles of subnational governments with the federal government in terms of the jurisdiction and beyond that, the role in terms of the conservation of water.

Water is a unique commodity. It is more fundamental obviously to human life than any other commodity and certainly any potentially exportable commodity.

It is not just a trade issue, it is not just an environmental issue, it is even a foreign policy issue. In a post cold war environment with an increasingly complicated world in terms of foreign affairs, with the declining role of the nation state, water is going to be—it is not a matter of will it be—but water is going to be the source of conflict in the future. In the past it may have been oil or some other commodity, but water in the future will be more important in the role it plays in our foreign policy and in terms of world conflict.

In an age where we talk more of human security versus national security, water certainly plays a role in both. Those will be issues

Supply

that we have to delve into with significant debate. This type of debate has to exist in the committees for example, environment, trade, intergovernmental affairs, as well as in this House.

The U.S. and Canada have no shortage of things to fight over. We have beer, wheat, lumber, magazines, all kinds of trade issues to deal with on an ongoing basis. Canada has 20% of the world's freshwater supply, most of it in the Great Lakes. The remainder is pouring unchecked into three oceans. The United States with one-tenth of our freshwater has nearly nine times as many people, a great deal of whom want to live in the scenic but dry southwest, but all of whom need water.

Certainly there is growing pressure on Canada to export water in bulk. These attempts of course have run afoul of environmentalists, the Canadian government and Canadian nationalists. Naturally it has ended up in the courts as part of the ongoing process of international trade engagement.

The latest battle in California between Sun Belt Water company and the province of British Columbia is just another example of the types of ongoing negotiations and legal battles that we will have within the NAFTA framework.

• (1700)

We should always expect that these will occur periodically.

It is very important that we do not dismiss at hand the export of water. Some estimates are that 60% of our freshwater supply is wasted. All someone has to do is spend a rain soaked winter in Vancouver to recognize that we have a significant supply of freshwater. A significant amount of our water is running unchecked into oceans.

Certainly water is different. Maude Barlow and the Council of Canadians argue that water is different. Maude Barlow and the Council of Canadians believe that nothing should be traded. She and her organization do not believe that in any way, shape or form trade can benefit Canadians. I disagree fundamentally with that principle.

We are supporting the motion today because we feel it is an important debate. We will not be supporting the amendment, however, because the amendment is unequivocal and says that Canada should not be party to any international agreement that compels us to export freshwater against our will. The word compels has its inherent ambiguity.

I do not believe that any member of this House has all the facts to make that kind of unequivocal judgment at this time. We need the debate.

Currently the government will dither and dilly-dally as it is wont to do with a number of these types of issues. Water export opportunities are appearing. In Gander, Newfoundland McCurdy Enterprises, formerly a construction company, has a proposal to

Supply

load water from Gisborne Lake into oil tankers and ship it to parched souls in Asia. There are issues in British Columbia.

There is an economic opportunity but we cannot partake in economic opportunities if they compromise our environmental policy in this country. That is something I would argue no member of parliament would want to do.

We cannot separate economic and environmental arguments. The separation of economic and environmental arguments has led over the years to the degradation of the environment. It is extraordinarily important that these two areas, economics and the environment, are inextricably linked in public policy. We have to get our heads around this.

We will be supporting the motion. We will not be supporting the amendment. We look forward to a legitimate debate in the House of Commons about this very important environmental and economic issue.

We would hope that when that debate occurs we can consider all the spheres of influence involved, including our foreign policy, our policy in terms of foreign aid and our obligations to people in a human security and not just a national security context, and that we deal very seriously with an issue that could very easily be turned into a political issue and not a public policy issue.

Ms. Wendy Lill (Dartmouth, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would just like to ask the hon. member about being compelled. That is part of the amendment we have put forward here.

I would like to ask him how he would describe the whole MMT issue that occurred recently with the federal government. The federal government was challenged on its legislation banning MMT by the Ethyl Corporation which sued it for damages and won.

It seems the federal government capitulated entirely in face of the NAFTA challenge. I would say it was compelled to capitulate by the nature of the trade agreements we have entered into.

• (1705)

Compelled is a strong word but we have to start using some strong language at this point given the history of what we have seen happen on the trade floors and in the courts.

Mr. Scott Brison: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her question. It is a very important question. We have two areas of government policy in question here. One is domestic legislation on the environment brought forward by the current minister of trade when he was minister of the environment, and the other is trade policy. There are two separate areas.

I would argue the MMT legislation brought forward by the current minister of trade was badly designed legislation that was not designed to effectively stand up to the rigours of NAFTA and to the questions of national treatment.

National treatment is a fundamental part of trade agreements and our obligations under NAFTA. But national treatment simply means we are obligated in Canada to treat companies from another country with the same treatment that we would provide to our domestic companies.

If legislation is designed effectively that would apply for instance to our domestic companies in a non-discriminatory way, to protect the environment, that legislation would be tenable under NAFTA. If legislation is designed very specifically to target one foreign company it may not be tenable. That is why we have to become more rigorous as legislators in developing legislation that can stand up to the rigours of national treatment and the questions therein. I would argue that it was bad legislation. It was poorly designed and it did not stand up.

The whole question of national treatment boils down to one fundamental question. If we would not allow a Canadian company to participate in environmentally unsound behaviour then we would not allow a foreign company to participate in environmentally unsound behaviour. It is a national treatment issue. Pollution and environmental externals do not know national boundaries.

I do not see and have not been convinced by any of the opponents of liberalized trade how national treatment can jeopardize our environment if legislation in Canada is designed to stand up to the rigours of those trade agreements that we have signed and received the benefit of as Canadians.

Mr. Bryon Wilfert (Oak Ridges, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I welcome the attention being brought to the House today regarding the protection of Canada's freshwater resources.

I am pleased that this concern extends beyond potential trade of our water resources by referring more broadly to how we manage our watersheds and specifically to the need to prevent transfers of water between drainage basins or watersheds.

Indeed the watershed is recognized as the fundamental ecological unit in protecting and conserving our water resources. Bulk transfer or removal of water, whether for use elsewhere in Canada or for export purposes, could potentially have a significant impact on the health and integrity of our watersheds.

It is important that Canadians work together to ensure that we take a comprehensive and environmentally sound approach to protecting our water resources and their watersheds.

Supply

Water is an essential part of all ecosystems, from the functions and life support provided by lakes, rivers and streams to the role of the hydrological cycle in sustaining water in its various forms.

Access to adequate supplies of clean water is crucial to our health, to our quality of life and to Canada's competitive position. Much of our economy and jobs are tied directly or indirectly to our supplies of water, from farming, forestry and industrial development to tourism and the recreational sector.

With 9% of the world's renewable freshwater resources it is easy for us to assume that Canada has an abundance of water. Given that Canada's land mass is approximately 7% of the world total, 9% of its water does not seem disproportionate.

• (1710)

If we consider the imbalances in geographical distribution of water resources, the question of abundance becomes more relevant. About 60% of Canada's water flows northward while 90% of the population and most of Canada's industrial activity are found within 300 kilometres of the Canada-U.S. border where freshwater resources are increasingly in demand and some areas are polluted and unsafe.

In addition to these geographical variations in water abundance, Canada also experiences significant variations over time in water availability. For example, the Red River in southern Manitoba has experienced flows ranging between 1 cubic metre per second and 2,700 cubic metres per second. The Great Lakes watershed, which is home to 9 million Canadians and 33 million Americans, is experiencing its lowest level in 15 years.

Compounding these short term variations, climate change is expected to result in significant changes to water availability in different parts of the country. Thus although Canada would seem to possess substantial water resources, there are regions in Canada in which scarcities exist or will exist.

We must therefore have a strategy to ensure that water resources are managed and protected for future generations. It is clear that interbasin transfers involving man-made diversions of large quantities of water between watersheds have the potential to cause the most significant social, economic and environmental impacts.

However, we cannot ignore other means of bulk water removal such as by ocean tanker or pipeline which may cumulatively have the same impact on watersheds as large scale interbasin transfers.

For this reason I consider it of paramount importance that the issue of bulk water removal, including for export purposes, be considered in its entirety and that we not develop solutions to one

problem at a time at the expense of a more comprehensive approach.

Over the last 30 years concern about large scale export of Canadian water resources has risen primarily as a result of proposals to divert massive amounts of water to the United States to deal with water shortages or to allow for increased agricultural, industrial and urban development in areas of the United States with limited water supplies.

Several of these proposed megaprojects are worth mentioning. One of the largest continental water transfer proposals and probably the best known is the North American Water and Power Alliance project of the 1960s. This project would have involved the diversion of water from Alaska, northwestern Canada and watersheds surrounding Hudson Bay and James Bay to arid areas in the western United States, the prairie provinces and northern Mexico.

Another proposed megaproject was the grand recycling and northern development canal which would have transferred James Bay into a freshwater lake by building a dike between it and Hudson Bay and impounding the rivers that empty into the bay. The flows of rivers would have been reversed to deliver water to the Great Lakes and from there to other destinations in North America.

These megaprojects, while having the potential to create jobs and investments in Canada in the short term, would not benefit Canadian society in the long term.

The federal water policy of 1987 addresses Canada's experience with interbasin transfer projects by advocating caution in considering their need and by endorsing other less disputed alternatives such as demand management and water conservation.

The current focus of water exports proposals, however, is by tanker ship using water from lakes and streams such as last year's proposal to export water from Lake Superior to Asian markets, or by tanker trucks or pipelines carrying water from surface to groundwater sources.

Not only have the economics of water export clearly changed in terms of capital investment needs, but so has our understanding of the scope and the extent of potential environmental social and long term impacts. As I have already stated, bulk water removal, including export, must be viewed from a watershed approach.

This leads to the second concern that we take action to address the broad range of concerns facing freshwater in a comprehensive way rather than limiting ourselves to one export of water.

I support this motion. I believe a comprehensive approach is what Canadians deserve and what Canadians will get.

Supply

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): It being 5.15 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith any question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

[English]

Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

• (1715)

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Amendment agreed to)

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion, as amended, agreed to)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): At this point I would like to ask for unanimous consent to consider the clock as being 5.30 p.m. so that we can proceed with tonight's votes.

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

• (1740)

And the bells having rung:

Mr. Bill Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I think Canadians who have been watching the debate all day should know that the motion that was debated today and the amendment proposed, by the NDP, passed the House unanimously just a few minutes ago. A statement has been made about water exports.

ALLOTTED DAY—HEALTH

The House resumed from February 4 consideration of the motion and the amendment.

The Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Thursday, February 4, 1999, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the amendment relating to the business of supply.

• (1750)

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

(Division No. 312)

YEAS

Members

Abbott	Alarie
Anders	Asselin
Bachand (Saint-Jean)	Bellehumeur
Benoit	Bergeron
Bernier (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Borotsik
Breitkreuz (Yellowhead)	Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville)
Brien	Brison
Cadman	Cardin
Casey	Casson
Chatters	Chrétien (Frontenac—Mégantic)
Crête	de Savoye
Debien	Desrochers
Dubé (Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière)	Duceppe
Dumas	Duncan
Elley	Epp
Forseth	Gagnon
Gauthier	Gilmour
Girard-Bujold	Godin (Châteauguay)
Gouk	Grewal
Grey (Edmonton North)	Guay
Guimond	Hanger
Harris	Hart
Harvey	Herron
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)	Hilstrom
Jaffer	Johnston
Jones	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Konrad	Lalonde
Laurin	Lebel
Lefebvre	Loubier
Lowther	Lunn
Marceau	Marchand
Mark	Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Mayfield	McNally
Meredith	Mills (Red Deer)
Morrison	Muise
Obhrai	Pankiw
Penson	Perron
Picard (Drummond)	Plamondon
Price	Ramsay
Reynolds	Ritz
Rocheleau	Scott (Skeena)
Solberg	St-Hilaire
Stinson	St-Jacques
Strahl	Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Thompson (Wild Rose)	Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean)
Tremblay (Rimouski—Mitis)	Tupp
Vellacott	White (Langley—Abbotsford)
White (North Vancouver)	Williams—96

NAYS

Members

Adams	Alcock
Anderson	Assad
Assadourian	Augustine
Bakopanos	Barnes
Beaumier	Bélair
Bélanger	Bellemare
Bennett	Bertrand
Bevilacqua	Blaikie
Blondin-Andrew	Bonin
Bonwick	Boudria
Brown	Bryden
Bulte	Caccia
Calder	Cannis
Caplan	Carroll
Catterall	Cauchon
Chamberlain	Chan
Chrétien (Saint-Maurice)	Clouthier

Supply

Coderre
Comuzzi
Cullen
Desjarlais
Dhaliwal
Discepola
Dromisky
Duhamel
Eggleton
Finlay
Fontana
Gagliano
Godfrey
Graham
Guarnieri
Harvard
Ianno
Jackson
Jordan
Karygiannis
Kilger (Stormont—Dundas)
Knutson
Laliberte
Lavigne
Leung
Lincoln
Mahoney
Maloney
Manley
Marleau
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
McCormick
McGuire
McLellan (Edmonton West)
McWhinney
Milliken
Minna
Murray
Nault
Nunziata
O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)
Pagtakhan
Parrish
Peric
Pettigrew
Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)
Pratt
Provenzano
Reed
Riis
Robinson
Saada
Sekora
Shepherd
Speller
Steckle
Stewart (Northumberland)
Stoffer
Telegdi
Torsney
Valeri
Volpe
Whelan
Wood—161

Collenette
Copps
Davies
DeVillers
Dion
Dockrill
Drouin
Easter
Finestone
Folco
Fry
Galloway
Goodale
Grose
Hardy
Hubbard
Iftody
Jennings
Karetak-Lindell
Keyes
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Kraft Sloan
Lastewka
Lee
Lill
MacAulay
Malhi
Mancini
Marchi
Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
Massé
McDonough
McKay (Scarborough East)
McTeague
Mifflin
Mills (Broadview—Greenwood)
Mitchell
Myers
Normand
Nystrom
O'Reilly
Paradis
Patry
Peterson
Phinney
Pillitteri
Proctor
Redman
Richardson
Robillard
Rock
Scott (Fredericton)
Serré
Solomon
St. Denis
Stewart (Brant)
St-Julien
Szabo
Thibeault
Ur
Vanclief
Wappel
Wilfert

PAIRED MEMBERS

Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre)
Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Pabok
Bradshaw
Canuel
Dalphond-Guiral
Gray (Windsor West)
Longfield
Mercier
Proud
Venne

Bernier (Bonaventure—Gaspé—
Bigras
Byrne
Charbonneau
Fournier
Harb
Ménard
O'Brien (Labrador)
Sauvageau

The Speaker: I declare the amendment defeated. The next question is on the main motion.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bob Kilger: Mr. Speaker, I believe you would find unanimous consent to apply the results of the vote just taken to the main motion now before the House.

[*English*]

The Speaker: Is there agreement to proceed in such a fashion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Chuck Strahl: Mr. Speaker, I would agree with that. I would just like to add the member for Souris—Moose Mountain to the Reform Party's numbers.

The Speaker: He will be added.

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

(*Division No. 313*)

YEAS

Members

Abbott
Anders
Bachand (Saint-Jean)
Bellehumeur
Bergeron
Borotsik
Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville)
Brison
Cardin
Casson
Chrétien (Frontenac—Mégantic)
de Savoye
Desrochers
Duceppe
Duncan
Epp
Gagnon
Gilmour
Godin (Châteauguay)
Grewal
Guay
Hanger
Hart
Herron
Hilstrom
Johnston
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Lalonde
Lebel
Loubier
Lunn
Marchand
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
McNally
Mills (Red Deer)
Muisse
Pankiw
Perron
Plamondon
Ramsay
Ritz
Scott (Skeena)
St-Hilaire
St-Jacques
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean)
Turp
White (Langley—Abbotsford)
Williams—97

Alarie
Asselin
Bailey
Benoit
Bernier (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Breitkreuz (Yellowhead)
Brien
Cadman
Casey
Chatters
Crête
Debien
Dubé (Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière)
Dumas
Elley
Forseth
Gauthier
Girard-Bujold
Gouk
Grey (Edmonton North)
Guimond
Harris
Harvey
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
Jaffer
Jones
Konrad
Laurin
Lefebvre
Lowther
Marceau
Mark
Mayfield
Meredith
Morrison
Obhrai
Penson
Picard (Drummond)
Price
Reynolds
Rocheleau
Solberg
Stinson
Strahl
Thompson (Wild Rose)
Tremblay (Rimouski—Mitis)
Vellacott
White (North Vancouver)

Private Members' Business

NAYS

Members

Adams
Anderson
Assadourian
Bakopanos
Beaumier
Bélanger
Bennett
Bevilacqua
Blondin-Andrew
Bonwick
Brown
Bulte
Calder
Caplan
Catterall
Chamberlain
Chrétien (Saint-Maurice)
Coderre
Comuzzi
Cullen
Desjarlais
Dhaliwal
Discepolo
Dromisky
Duhamel
Eggleton
Finlay
Fontana
Gagliano
Godfrey
Graham
Guarnieri
Harvard
Ianno
Jackson
Jordan
Karygiannis
Kilger (Stormont—Dundas)
Knutson
Laliberte
Lavigne
Leung
Lincoln
Mahoney
Maloney
Manley
Marleau
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
McCormick
McGuire
McLellan (Edmonton West)
McWhinney
Milliken
Minna
Murray
Nault
Nunziata
O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)
Pagtakhan
Parrish
Peric
Pettigrew
Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)
Pratt
Provenzano
Reed
Riis
Robinson
Saada
Sekora
Shepherd
Speller
Steckle
Stewart (Northumberland)
Stoffer
Telegdi
Torsney
Valeri
Volpe
Whelan
Wood—161

Alcock
Assad
Augustine
Barnes
Bélair
Bellemare
Bertrand
Blaikie
Bonin
Boudria
Bryden
Caccia
Cannis
Carroll
Cauchon
Chan
Clouthier
Collenette
Coppes
Davies
DeVillers
Dion
Dockrill
Drouin
Easter
Finestone
Folco
Fry
Galloway
Goodale
Grose
Hardy
Hubbard
Iftody
Jennings
Karetak-Lindell
Keyes
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Kraft Sloan
Lastewka
Lee
Lill
MacAulay
Malhi
Mancini
Marchi
Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
Massé
McDonough
McKay (Scarborough East)
McTeague
Mifflin
Mills (Broadview—Greenwood)
Mitchell
Myers
Normand
Nystrom
O'Reilly
Paradis
Patry
Peterson
Phinney
Pillitteri
Proctor
Redman
Richardson
Robillard
Rock
Scott (Fredericton)
Serré
Solomon
St. Denis
Stewart (Brant)
St-Julien
Szabo
Thibeault
Ur
Vanclief
Wappel
Wilfert

PAIRED MEMBERS

Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre)
Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Pabok)
Bradshaw
Canuel
Dalphond-Guiral
Gray (Windsor West)
Longfield
Mercier
Proud
Venne

Bernier (Bonaventure—Gaspé—
Bigras
Byrne
Charbonneau
Fournier
Harb
Ménard
O'Brien (Labrador)
Sauvageau

The Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

[Translation]

Mr. Louis Plamondon: Mr. Speaker, before the vote, I wanted to make sure that, with respect to the motion put forward by the hon. member for Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys, the Clerk or the Chair heard me say “on division” in the vote on the motion before the last vote. I thought I heard the Chair say “carried”, but it should have been “carried on division”. That is what I said when I got to my seat and I want to make sure the Chair heard me.

The Speaker: We will come back to this after the other votes have been taken.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

MILITARY MISSIONS BEYOND THE BOUNDARIES OF CANADA

The House resumed from February 4 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: Pursuant to order made Thursday, February 4, 1999, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on Motion No. 380 under Private Members' Business.

The House has heard the terms of the motion. We will take the division row by row. The mover will be on my left and the mover will be the first vote, and then we will begin as we usually do with Private Members' Business from my left, from the last row forward, and then from my right, the last row forward, with those who are in favour of the motion.

• (1805)

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

(Division No. 314)

YEAS

Members

Abbott
Anders
Bachand (Saint-Jean)
Bellehumeur
Bergeron
Breitkreuz (Yellowhead)
Brien
Cadman

Alarie
Asselin
Bailey
Benoit
Blaikie
Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville)
Caccia
Cardin

Private Members' Business

Casson	Chatters	Goodale	Graham
Chrétien (Frontenac—Mégantic)	Crête	Grose	Guarnieri
Davies	de Savoye	Harvard	Harvey
Debien	Desjarlais	Herron	Hubbard
Desrochers	Dockrill	Ianno	Iftody
Dubé (Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière)	Duceppe	Jackson	Jennings
Dumas	Duncan	Jones	Jordan
Elley	Epp	Karetak-Lindell	Karygiannis
Forseth	Gagnon	Keyes	Kilger (Stormont—Dundas)
Gauthier	Gilmour	Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)	Knutson
Girard-Bujold	Godin (Châteauguay)	Kraft Sloan	Lastewka
Gouk	Grewal	Lavigne	Lee
Grey (Edmonton North)	Guay	Leung	MacAulay
Guimond	Hanger	Mahoney	Malhi
Hardy	Harris	Maloney	Manley
Hart	Hill (Prince George—Peace River)	Marchi	Marleau
Hilstrom	Jaffer	Martin (LaSalle—Émard)	Massé
Johnston	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	McCormick	McGuire
Konrad	Laliberte	McKay (Scarborough East)	McLellan (Edmonton West)
Lalonde	Laurin	McTeague	McWhinney
Lebel	Lefebvre	Mifflin	Milliken
Lill	Lincoln	Mills (Broadview—Greenwood)	Minna
Loubier	Lowther	Mitchell	Muise
Lunn	Mancini	Murray	Myers
Marceau	Marchand	Nault	Normand
Mark	Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)	O'Reilly
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	Mayfield	Pagtakhan	Paradis
McDonough	McNally	Parrish	Parry
Meredith	Mills (Red Deer)	Peric	Peterson
Morrison	Nunziata	Pettigrew	Phinney
Nystrom	Obhrai	Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)	Pillitteri
Pankiw	Penson	Pratt	Price
Perron	Picard (Drummond)	Provenzano	Redman
Plamondon	Proctor	Reed	Richardson
Ramsay	Reynolds	Robillard	Rock
Riis	Ritz	Saada	Scott (Fredericton)
Robinson	Rocheleau	Sekora	Serré
Scott (Skeena)	Solberg	Shepherd	Speller
Solomon	St-Hilaire	St. Denis	Steckle
Stinson	Stoffer	Stewart (Brant)	Stewart (Northumberland)
Strahl	Thompson (Wild Rose)	St-Jacques	St-Julien
Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean)	Tremblay (Rimouski—Mitis)	Szabo	Telegdi
Turp	Vellacott	Thibeault	Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
White (Langley—Abbotsford)	White (North Vancouver)	Torsney	Ur
Williams—105		Valeri	Vanclief
		Volpe	Wappel
		Whelan	Wilfert
		Wood—151	

NAYS

Members

Adams	Alcock
Anderson	Assad
Assadourian	Augustine
Bakopanos	Barnes
Beaumier	Bélaïr
Bélanger	Bellemare
Bennett	Bernier (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Bertrand	Bevilacqua
Blondin-Andrew	Bonin
Bonwick	Borotsik
Boudria	Brisson
Brown	Bryden
Bulte	Calder
Cannis	Caplan
Carroll	Casey
Catterall	Cauchon
Chamberlain	Chan
Cloutier	Coderre
Collenette	Comuzzi
Copps	Cullen
DeVillers	Dhaliwal
Dion	Discepolo
Dromisky	Drouin
Duhamel	Easter
Eggleton	Finlay
Folco	Fontana
Fry	Gagliano
Galloway	Godfrey

PAIRED MEMBERS

Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre)	Bernier (Bonaventure—Gaspé—
Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Pabok)	Bigras
Bradshaw	Byrne
Canuel	Charbonneau
Dalphonde-Guiral	Fournier
Gray (Windsor West)	Harb
Longfield	Ménard
Mercier	O'Brien (Labrador)
Proud	Sauvageau
Venne	

The Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

* * *

ENERGY EFFICIENCY STRATEGY

The House resumed from February 5 consideration of the motion.

Private Members' Business

The Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Friday, February 5, 1999, the next deferred recorded division is on Motion No. 300 under Private Members' Business.

We will begin on the left with the mover of the motion and will then take the back rows and move forward, and we will do the same on the other side.

• (1815)

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

(Division No. 315)

YEAS

Members

Abbott	Adams
Alcock	Anders
Anderson	Assad
Assadourian	Augustine
Bailey	Bakopanos
Barnes	Beaumier
Bélair	Bélangier
Bellemare	Bennett
Benoit	Bernier (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Bertrand	Bevilacqua
Blaikie	Blondin-Andrew
Bonin	Bonwick
Borotsik	Boudria
Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville)	Brisson
Brown	Bryden
Bulte	Caccia
Cadman	Calder
Cannis	Caplan
Carroll	Casey
Casson	Catterall
Cauchon	Chamberlain
Chan	Chatters
Clouthier	Coderre
Collenette	Comuzzi
Copps	Cullen
Davies	Desjarlais
DeVillers	Dhaliwal
Dion	Discepola
Dockrill	Dromisky
Drouin	Duhamel
Duncan	Easter
Eggleton	Elley
Epp	Finlay
Folco	Fontana
Fry	Gagliano
Gilmour	Godfrey
Goodale	Graham
Grewal	Grey (Edmonton North)
Grose	Guarnieri
Hanger	Hardy
Harris	Hart
Harvard	Harvey
Herron	Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
Hillstrom	Ianno
Iftody	Jackson
Jaffer	Jennings
Johnston	Jones
Jordan	Karetak-Lindell
Karygiannis	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Keys	Kilger (Stormont—Dundas)
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)	Knutson
Konrad	Kraft Sloan
Laliberte	Lastewka
Lavigne	Lee
Lefebvre	Leung
Lill	Lincoln
Lowther	Lunn
MacAulay	Mahoney
Malhi	Maloney
Mancini	Manley

Marchi	Mark
Marleau	Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Martin (LaSalle—Émard)	Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Massé	Mayfield
McCormick	McDonough
McGuire	McKay (Scarborough East)
McLellan (Edmonton West)	McNally
McTeague	McWhinney
Meredith	Mifflin
Mills (Broadview—Greenwood)	Mills (Red Deer)
Minna	Mitchell
Muise	Murray
Myers	Nault
Normand	Nunziata
Nystrom	Obhrai
O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)	O'Reilly
Pagtakhan	Pankiw
Paradis	Parrish
Patry	Penson
Peric	Peterson
Pettigrew	Phinney
Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)	Pillitteri
Pratt	Price
Proctor	Provenzano
Ramsay	Redman
Reed	Richardson
Riis	Ritz
Robillard	Robinson
Rock	Saada
Scott (Fredericton)	Scott (Skeena)
Sekora	Serré
Shepherd	Solberg
Solomon	Speller
St. Denis	Steckle
Stewart (Brant)	Stewart (Northumberland)
Stinson	St-Jacques
St-Julien	Stoffer
Strahl	Szabo
Telegdi	Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Thompson (Wild Rose)	Torsney
Ur	Valeri
Vanclief	Vellacott
Volpe	Wappel
Whelan	White (Langley—Abbotsford)
White (North Vancouver)	Wilfert
Williams	Wood—212

NAYS

Members

Alarie	Asselin
Bachand (Saint-Jean)	Bellehumeur
Bergeron	Brien
Cardin	Chrétien (Frontenac—Mégantic)
Crête	de Savoye
Debien	Desrochers
Dubé (Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière)	Duceppe
Dumas	Gagnon
Galloway	Gauthier
Girard-Bujold	Godin (Châteauguay)
Guay	Guimond
Hubbard	Lalonde
Laurin	Lebel
Loubier	Marceau
Marchand	Perron
Picard (Drummond)	Plamondon
Reynolds	Rocheleau
St-Hilaire	Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean)
Tremblay (Rimouski—Mitis)	Turp—38

PAIRED MEMBERS

Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre)	Bernier (Bonaventure—Gaspé—
Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Pabok)	Bigras
Bradshaw	Byrne
Canuel	Charbonneau
Dalphon-Duval	Fournier

Gray (Windsor West)
Longfield
Mercier
Proud
Venne

Harb
Ménard
O'Brien (Labrador)
Sauvageau

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

[*Translation*]

About the point of order, I asked the speaker who was in the chair at the time and she did not hear the words. But I will inquire further. I will check *Hansard* and review the videotape and report back to the House as soon as possible, probably tomorrow.

Mr. Louis Plamondon: Mr. Speaker, I think this can be sorted out fairly easily. I presume it could be done with the unanimous consent of the House. Not much is changed, but all day long we have spoken against the motion and it goes without saying that we were going to vote against it. I did say “on division”, but I was at the back and may not have been heard.

Could I get unanimous consent to say that the motion was agreed to on division?

[*English*]

Mr. Bill Blaikie : Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I do not think we could give unanimous consent.

If unanimous consent was being sought to start the process all over again with respect to the supply day motion and the amendment, that would be one thing. But the fact of the matter is that we did not stand as we had planned to cause a vote to be taken on the motion and the amendment because we were under the impression there was unanimous consent, that no opposition had been expressed, in spite of the fact that the motion had been talked against throughout the day.

If we are going to rewrite history, then we need to go back to square one and start all over again.

The Speaker: The Speaker in the chair at the time did not hear the words “on division”. The Speaker did not hear them. Therefore I would rule that no one having heard it, unless you give me time to review *Hansard*, perhaps it was heard there or on television, then I would come back. We would then put it before the House and see what was happening at that point.

If the House is in agreement, that is what I propose to do. Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Private Members' Business

● (1820)

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): Order, please. It being 6.20 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's order paper.

* * *

[*English*]

CANADIAN HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

The House resumed from November 17, 1998, consideration of the motion that Bill S-11, an act to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act in order to add social condition as a prohibited ground of discrimination, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. John Herron (Fundy—Royal, PC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak to the merits of supporting Bill S-11, an act to amend the Canadian Human Rights act.

This bill, sponsored by my colleague the hon. member for Shefford, was originally proposed in the Senate by my friend and Progressive Conservative colleague Senator Erminie Cohen.

I have been fortunate enough to speak to a number of very important bills since being elected in June 1997. I am very pleased to have the opportunity to speak on this particular bill because it addresses probably the most important right of all, that of human rights.

Senator Cohen comes from a province with an outstanding tradition of championing human rights issues. Gordon Fairweather, the former member of parliament for Fundy—Royal, the riding I represent, was also Canada's first human rights commissioner.

John Humphreys, the world renowned principal author of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, was born and buried in the town of Hampton which is in my riding.

Senator Cohen, like our fellow New Brunswickers, understands how difficult times affect Canadian families and the community as a whole when the local plants shut down. Families have to make sacrifices that they never dreamed would happen to them. She knows about the closures at the Potocan mine and the impending job losses at Lantic Sugar. These are hardworking Canadians with an uncertain future.

I do not think that anyone should be surprised that Senator Cohen has tabled this bill. Bill S-11 shows her ability to care for individuals. I have known Senator Cohen for a number of years. I also know the member for Shefford. They are caring individuals

Private Members' Business

who want to ensure that we do the best for those persons at the margins of our society.

This bill is about ensuring access to the basic tools people need to get back on their feet. It is about maintaining pride and dignity despite the tough times life sometimes has to offer.

Currently the Canadian Human Rights Act prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, religion, nationality or ethnic origin, colour, sex, marital status, family status, disability, conviction of an offence for which a pardon has been given, and sexual orientation. By explicitly listing Canada's vulnerable groups, the poignantly absent qualification in the 22-year old act is a reference to social condition. Seven out of ten provinces in Canada prohibit discrimination on the basis of social condition, social origin or sources of income in their respective human rights legislation.

According to the United Nations in its review of Canada's compliance with the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights signed in 1976, this great nation of ours received a failing grade on our ability to protect the rights of the poor. We parliamentarians have an opportunity to take a tremendous leap forward and rectify this tragic situation by supporting Bill S-11. The time for Canada to bring forward federal legislation is long overdue.

On December 10 we celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. As I already mentioned, this document was drafted by native New Brunswicker and former resident of my riding of Fundy—Royal, John Humphreys.

• (1825)

The declaration states essentially that all human beings regardless of their circumstances are born free and equal in dignity and rights. This bears repeating. All human beings regardless of their circumstances are born free and equal in dignity and rights.

It is a shame that Canada's own human rights act does not fully respect the goals and the intent of this important document, a document drafted by a Canadian.

The 50th anniversary of this world renowned declaration also marked the end of the first year of the United Nations international decade for the eradication of poverty. However, being poor in Canada continues to be one of our greatest hurdles for achieving equality. There is no better time for us to act than now.

One in five Canadian children live in poverty. We recognize that when children are poor, it is because their families are poor. As Canadians we are fortunate enough to live in a wealthy country but the marginalized are in need both physically and psychologically.

In my riding we try to address the physical needs of the poor through food basket programs run by great charitable organizations

like the Sussex Sharing Club, the Lakewood Headstart Association, Kennebecasis Valley Food Basket, Chipman Community Care, the Minto Community Resource Centre and the Hampton Food Basket. I am very proud of the sense of community that exists in my riding of Fundy—Royal.

Bill S-11 addresses this inadequacy in our Constitution and offers the poor relief from negative stereotypes that affect their psychological well-being. It promotes human dignity, the very essence of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

While provincial legislation addresses the rights of the poor for issues under that jurisdiction, the federal human rights act covers issues under federal jurisdiction such as banking, housing and telecommunications. As it stands today, the poor are too often denied housing or barred from opening bank accounts.

Bill S-11 does not provide any special status for the poor. There is nothing contained in the bill that is not already afforded to other Canadians. There is nothing to fear from endorsing this plan, yet I understand the government has no intention of supporting the legislation. It instead promises to review the human rights act in its entirety for several possible changes.

This promise has been on the table since the Liberals took office and still no new legislation is planned. Senator Cohen and the member for Shefford chose to take action now.

It is our duty as parliamentarians to serve on behalf of all constituents. That is why it is incumbent on us to support this bill. If we choose not to, then we are nowhere near the great moral authority our Prime Minister likes to call Canada.

In 1989 the Progressive Conservative government took bold and persuasive action and succeeded in unanimously passing a resolution to eliminate child poverty by the year 2000. Since that time, Canadians are unfortunately no closer to their goal due to the massive cuts in transfer payments to the provinces by this current government.

Today we have the possibility to announce to Canadians that discrimination on the basis of social condition will no longer be tolerated. Let us not waste that opportunity.

Ms. Eleni Bakopanos (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to begin by stating that contrary to what was said, the Minister of Justice strongly endorses the premise of Bill S-11 and the hon. member's desire to take a concrete step forward to assist the poor in Canada.

To be denied services, accommodation or employment because one is poor is totally unacceptable in Canada and totally unacceptable by this government.

All Canadians are justifiably proud of their human rights protection. We believe strongly in the inherent worth and dignity of each member of society. If we are serious about protecting the poor, I believe we should do it right.

This government will soon be announcing a comprehensive review of the Canadian Human Rights Act. This review will give us the opportunity to look very seriously at how we can best enhance human rights protection for the poor in this country.

If we really wish to ensure adequate human rights protection for all Canadians, then we must proceed in a thoughtful and principled manner. We need to look at what human rights need to be protected and how they can be protected in the federal sector. In our opinion, this can best be done in the context of examining the Canadian Human Rights Act as a whole.

• (1830)

[*Translation*]

The present government is proud of its human rights achievements. We amended the Canadian Human Rights Act to prohibit discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and we brought in legislation requiring that all victims of discrimination be accommodated.

Recently, we passed a bill to facilitate the integration of the disabled into the criminal justice system. We also increased compensation to victims of human rights discrimination and improved the structure of the human rights tribunal. We have brought about advances in the protection of human rights in Canada.

Our government's efforts to improve the rights of the disabled recently won recognition. During a visit to the United States, our Prime Minister was presented with the Franklin Delano Roosevelt award, an award given to the country that has most advanced the rights of the disabled.

[*English*]

The government has improved the CHRA in a time when some would limit or dismantle the protection given to the most vulnerable in our society. The Minister of Justice is not content to rest on these improvements. She is committed to an examination of the act in its entirety.

In September the auditor general indicated, first, that the current act needed to be modified to better serve Canadians and, second, that the Canadian Human Rights Commission needed updating in order to process complaints more efficiently.

These are some recommendations that merit a careful review. We understand that there are other concerns that also need to be addressed. This is why the Minister of Justice will soon be announcing the process for the comprehensive review. It is because we are launching the review that I am saying let us wait for

Private Members' Business

the review to examine how we can best prevent discrimination against the poor.

It seems curious that we would begin to launch into examination of the prohibited grounds of discrimination under the CHRA on the eve of a more fulsome review of all aspects of the legislation. To simply add a new ground that is not well understood and may not produce the results that we all desire will not help the poor.

An overly simplistic response in the absence of a detailed analysis on this very important issue could result in endless litigation. That is not what we all want. We want changes to policies and programs to ensure that the already disadvantaged in our society are not further disadvantaged by attitudes and treatments that do not respect the dignity of all members of the human family.

While we believe it would be responsible at this time for the government to expand the prescribed ground of discrimination to take into account the real needs of the poor, I would like to make it clear we are not suggesting for a moment that we do not need to ensure that the act provides protection for the poor. For example, I am well aware of the recent provincial report on homelessness released in Toronto known as the Golden report which clearly demonstrates the need to address many of the problems facing the poor.

At the top of the list the problems confronting the poor in Canada is the issue of affordable housing. I would like to discuss this problem in some detail as it is a problem raised by some of the senators in supporting the bill and by many of the witnesses that appeared before the Senate committee.

Without question discrimination and accommodation is a serious problem that must be addressed. Individuals on social assistance, particularly single, separated or divorced mothers, face many burdens in obtaining any form of accommodation. The Golden report documents that the face of homelessness has changed and indeed there are now entire families that are homeless.

An Ontario Board of Inquiry, the Human Rights Code, December 22, 1998 decision in *Kearney v Bramale Ltd.*, questioned the rules pertaining to the portion of an individual's income that can be allotted for accommodation. This income testing rule was held to be unfair as it unduly limited the small pool of housing available to the poor. There is a wide divergence across Canada in human rights codes and the use of terminology covering discrimination against the poor.

In Ontario, for example, the Ontario Human Rights Code prohibits discrimination on the basis of receipt of public assistance. It is this ground, along with the grounds of sex, marital status, citizenship, place of origin and family status, which is used in the *Kearney* case to challenge the income testing rules used by some

Private Members' Business

landlords to determine eligibility to rent an apartment and which has as its impact the effect of denying housing to many individuals with a low income. It should be noted that the existence of a social condition type ground in Ontario is limited to occupancy and accommodation situations.

By comparison, in British Columbia the residential tenancy act prohibits discrimination on the basis of lawful source of income. Yet it is interesting to note that these two provinces only use this ground to prohibit discrimination in the field of accommodation.

• (1835)

Let me continue to review the provincial human rights legislation on this issue. In addition to Ontario and British Columbia, which I have already mentioned, in Alberta the human rights and multiculturalism act includes source of income as a prohibited ground of discrimination. Manitoba and Nova Scotia have a ground called source of income. Newfoundland protects social origin. Saskatchewan protects receipt of public assistance. Yukon, Northwest Territories and P.E.I. do not protect any poverty related ground directly. New Brunswick on December 9, 1998, introduced an amendment to the human rights act to add social condition.

Overall we can see there is diversity in the use and application of the term social condition. For the most part the term is used to apply to situations involving accommodation. In the federal sector there is very little residential accommodation outside housing for military, RCMP or foreign service officers.

Adding the ground of social condition to prohibit discrimination in housing is not necessarily a practical solution as housing is primarily a provincial matter. In this it may be that in the provincial context that the ground of social condition may have a greater impact.

[*Translation*]

At the present time, Quebec is the only province to ban discrimination on the basis of social condition. It added this to its legislation texts in 1976. It would be worthwhile to examine the repercussions arising in Quebec from its inclusion.

The term "social condition" refers to an individual's place in society. This is determined by a number of factors, particularly family background, employment, level of education, and physical capacities. The connection between social condition and the discrimination must be proven. A cause and effect relationship must be demonstrated in each case.

Even in Quebec, where the definition of "social condition" is a broader one, the majority of complaints relate to cases where an individual has been refused accommodation.

[*English*]

In this province there has been a few limited cases involving employment situations. In the case of *Lambert v. Quebec*, ministère du Tourisme, the complainant was in receipt of social security benefits. He participated in a government work program that provided him with less than the minimum wage. To permit someone on social assistance to receive less than the minimum wage was held to be discriminatory.

Now let us turn to the federal context. As I have stated, there is less scope for discrimination against the poor in the context of residential housing as this field is primarily a provincial jurisdiction. However there are other issues that do need to be examined in the federal sector.

We have all heard from Canadians about concerns raised with regard to situations that may arise in the banking and the telecommunications sectors, although the banks have made more recent changes to ensure that low income individuals have better access to banking services. Groups such as the National Anti-Poverty Organization have alleged that the banks may in certain situations discriminate against the poor. I am not in a position to judge or even comment on these allegations.

However, before we can amend the law we need to know the exact nature of the problem and how and whether we can resolve it with the human rights legislation. In other words the government is proposing a comprehensive review of the Canadian Human Rights Act in order to make sure that we do it properly.

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Ref.): Madam Speaker, when I saw the bill come before the House I specifically asked to speak to it. I immediately thought that the bill encompassed both some of the best intentions and worst ideas that I have ever seen in a piece of legislation to come before us.

It is not uncommon for good intentions and poor execution to be commingled in the same political project as we have before us today, which of course is to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act to essentially prohibit discrimination on the basis of social condition, whatever that means.

I am disturbed that this is a Senate bill originating in that other place which would happen to be the one that does not have any democratic legitimacy. That would be the chamber filled with unaccountable, unelected, patronage hacks. Dozens of thoughtful private members' bills have come forward from members of this place who happen to be elected and accountable, whose ideas happen to come from the voters and not from their ivory tower. Private members' bills that originate from this place ought to be deemed votable by the private members' bill committee but rather it gave one of the very few votable spots available to empower individual MPs to a senator in the case of Bill S-11.

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• (1840)

That in my humble opinion is sufficient grounds to vote against this or any other bill that originates from a completely absurd anachronism of an institution which should have died with the 19th century from whence it came.

I do not think there is a member of this place or citizen of the country who does not oppose poverty and unjust discrimination. I certainly do not. I prefer to demonstrate my compassion for those who have economic circumstances less fortunate than my own through private charitable activities and contributions. I happen to believe that compassion as Mother Teresa reminded us literally means to suffer with. It does not mean to legislate good intentions.

When I hear the intentions of the movers of the bill, when I hear the member for Shefford say, as I believe she did in this place, that Canada's obsession with the debt and the deficit demonstrate that we really despise the poor, I frankly find that bizarre in a country that has spent untold billions of scarce resources by taxing money away from struggling families, many of whom are below the so-called poverty line. In this enormous project of wealth redistribution to say that Canadians somehow despise the poor because they want to pay their bills is a gross statement of hyperbole which does not belong in this place or this debate.

What would the bill seek to do? I do not think anybody really knows. I read the transcripts of the Senate committee where Bill S-11 was examined. Witness after witness was asked how social condition is defined. There appeared to be no clear consensus or no clear definition.

One thing is clear. To prevent the public sector, parliament, from discriminating against people on the basis of their social condition, it would have some very interesting but unintended consequences. For one thing it would take what is right now a steeply progressive tax system and turn it into a completely flat tax system. Right now the top 1% of income earners, those who report income of over about \$150,000 a year, represent about 9% of the income reported in Canada but pay over 20% of the taxes.

The current tax laws very clearly discriminate against people on the basis of income. The lowest income people, I would argue quite appropriately, pay no taxes. We have this enormous case of discrimination on the basis of social condition.

Do the movers of the bill intend that it ought to be interpreted in such a way that the tax laws of the country would no longer be able or that social benefits should no longer be able to be targeted on the basis of income?

Do they suggest the clawback that exists for various social payments ought to be eliminated and that billionaires ought to have

the same entitlement to social payments as do the indigent poor? Probably not but they have not addressed that question.

What is it that they are attempting to do? I would suggest they are trying to impose a radical egalitarian, frankly socialist idea which is Marxist in its origins on the private sector to restrict liberty and freedom.

We just heard the parliamentary secretary suggest that if this law were passed it would change the way that banks deal with the poor, with people who are in poverty. What do these people mean by that? Do they mean that if such a statute or amendment were passed a bank or a financial institution would be compelled by force of law, as interpreted and implied by an unelected and unaccountable human rights tribunal, to supply a loan to somebody with no income, no assets and no reasonable prospect of assets or income?

• (1845)

Is that what is implied? If it is not, then why have we not defined that kind of interpretation in the bill?

The lack of definition surrounding social condition is wide open. Is it merely an oversight? No, it is clearly not. Clearly the advocates of this radical egalitarian socialist idea have in mind allowing a wide open interpretation so that our friends, the robed Solons on the bench, may interpret and apply this law in whatever manner they deem appropriate.

In other words, the advocates of potentially radical legislation such as this do not want to paint a picture for democratic discussion as to what the consequences of such legislation would be, they want the courts to do it.

I refer to Professor Martha Jackman of the Faculty of Law at the University of Ottawa who appeared at some length before the Senate committee on this issue both in November 1997 and May 1998. She made some very interesting statements defending the lack of definition.

She says "I would strongly discourage you from including the notion of a definition within this bill because this would be anomalous. There is a significant amount of literature about the idea of race being essentially an artificial concept". We have race, religion and other grounds within the bills that courts and commissions have wrestled with successfully from the perspective of radical leftists such as Professor Jackman.

She goes on to say "I would discourage the committee from the idea of defining social condition within the bill because that freezes the definition at a particular time that is antithetical to the approach that has been taken in human rights statutes".

She goes on to talk about the case of Vriend in Alberta where the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that the sovereign democratic legislature of the people of Alberta was contravening the charter of rights by not having included in a particular statute a term which now exists in the charter of rights. In other words, the courts

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decided to legislate from the bench in the Vriend decision. She says that if we pass this well-intentioned amendment of social condition we will be empowering the courts to do the same thing in respect of social condition as they did with respect to social orientation in Vriend.

She said "Based on precedence, recognition under provincial and federal human rights statutes is in itself a criteria for finding an analogous, non-enumerated ground under the charter".

What she is saying is "Please, parliament, pass this bill so we can then empower the courts to use this bill as the basis of reading in a new constitutionally protected ground of non-discrimination".

I submit that if the proponents of this remedy wish it to be entrenched in the Constitution they ought to do it directly, honestly and transparently by introducing an amendment to the charter of rights and freedoms and not through the nefarious back door of this statute.

[Translation]

Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Madam Speaker, I rise today, with a great deal of personal conviction and interest, in support of the initiative by my hon. colleague from Shefford, whose bill is aimed at amending the Canadian Human Rights Act by adding social condition to the prohibited grounds of discrimination.

It must be admitted that poverty is the worst enemy, not only of human development, but also of social and economic development, and represents our civilization's greatest failure. We are forced to admit that the increase in poverty is a source of great shame as the third millennium approaches.

The motion by the hon. member for Shefford reads as follows:

That Bill S-11, an act to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act in order to add social condition as a prohibited ground of discrimination, be now read a second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

We know that the Canadian Human Rights Act is a masterpiece. It protects against discrimination and guarantees opportunity, but one of its weaknesses is that it does not directly recognize poverty as a source of inequality. As we know, the figures on the increase in poverty, and on everything being poor in Canada represents, are shocking.

• (1850)

Daily, newspaper headlines remind us, and I will quote a few "Poverty gaining ground in Montreal", "Greater Montreal, of all metropolitan areas in the country, has the most low income families". In Saint-Georges, "Moisson Québec distributes over

1,300 Christmas hampers". And here is another headline "Street kids, 14 and 15 year olds living one day at a time".

Around Quebec City "Moisson Québec, two million kilos of food"; "The agri-food industry manages its stocks much better than in the past, but now we need to go further to find the items we need". Here is another, "The poor children of the universal declaration of human rights". Every day, newspaper headlines recall this sad state of affairs.

It is surprising, to say the least, that the Canadian Human Rights Act does not recognize social condition as an illicit grounds, because, as a signatory to many international and regional instruments on human rights, Canada has made a commitment to guarantee the rights contained therein for Canadians, without distinction.

In a number of provinces, much progress has been made in including social origin as discriminatory in certain codes. Newfoundland, for example, prohibits discrimination on the basis of social origin. The Ontario human rights code prohibits discrimination in the area of housing, discrimination based on the fact that a person receives welfare. The Alberta, Manitoba and Nova Scotia codes of human rights prohibit discrimination based on sources of income and Saskatchewan's on the receipt of social assistance.

While these initiatives are praiseworthy in their attempt to eliminate discrimination based on poverty, the provisions are limited to the fact of being on welfare.

However, we all know that it is possible to work and remain poor. That is why we may rightly be proud of the Quebec legislation, which is the only one to include the expression "social condition" without limiting its scope to apply only to those on welfare. That is why the Quebec charter of rights and freedoms is considered, and rightly so, as the most progressive and modern.

Closer scrutiny reveals that the changes proposed in Bill S-11 are in line with provincial legislation and Quebec legislation in particular.

Before going any further, we must ask ourselves whether the issue of poverty warrants such an amendment to the Canadian Human Rights Act. In the face of this ever-increasing poverty and given the ineffective policies developed by the Liberals to remedy the situation, the answer is clear: yes, and the sooner the better.

Looking back about 10 years, we can see why. On November 24, 1989, the House of Commons unanimously passed the following motion:

That this House express its concern for the more than one million Canadian children currently living in poverty and seek to achieve the goal of eliminating poverty among Canadian children by the year 2000.

Strangely enough, nearly 10 years later, the number of children living in poverty has increased by 60% to a record level of 1.5 million.

Several organizations involved in denouncing poverty and assessing the various policies implemented by the Liberal government point at decisions that defeat the stated purpose of eliminating poverty in Canada, and they criticize and condemn the government's social policies. These organizations include the National Council of Welfare, the Canadian Council on Social Development and Campaign 2000.

The National Council of Welfare made the following statement:

The child tax benefit should be fully indexed to the cost of living effective July 1, 1999.

We are therefore still waiting for this government to take action. In a report released December 7 entitled "The Progress of Canada's Children", the Canadian Council on Social Development was critical of the fact that, and I quote:

—improvements in the lives of Canadian children and youth have been offset by negative social and economic trends.

• (1855)

The Council blames the low benefits received by unemployed workers and also calls for the federal government's contribution to the national child tax benefit to be increased to a total of \$2.5 billion annually for the year 2000.

This government has its work cut out for it in the fight against poverty in Canada. As well, on November 28, Canada was accused of obstruction by representatives of a UN committee looking at Canada's efforts to reduce poverty and social inequality. Committee members expressed dissatisfaction because of the imprecise nature of responses to specific questions on homelessness, welfare cuts through the Canada social transfer, and the other social problems.

In its report, which was released last December 4, the UN committee severely faults Canada for the rapid deterioration of Canadians' living conditions. Canada is not ranked first, but tenth, according to the United Nations human development index.

Campaign 2000, a poverty fighting organization, recently released its 1998 report on child poverty, and its findings are shocking. The number of children in families with an income under \$20,000 has risen by 65%. The number of children in families where unemployment is chronic has risen by 33%. The number of children whose families are on welfare has risen by 51%. The number of children living in housing their families cannot afford has risen by 91%.

Despite the fact that all these figures point to the very opposite conclusion, the federal government continues to claim that the

measures presently in place are appropriate and respond to the needs of children and families suffering from poverty.

I would like to offer an illustration of why I believe the government continues to claim that the measures presently in place respond to the needs of children. In response to one of my questions in the House, the Minister of Human Resources Development said "I want to reassure the members of this House by telling them that eliminating child poverty is a priority and that all our programs reflect that priority", but beyond all these figures and all these observations, there are men and women and children suffering and they must remain foremost in our concerns.

Poverty means being hungry and not knowing after the second week in the month how to find enough food. It means going to school hungry. It means being cold and having to choose between a coat for one or boots for the other. It means having one's dreams dashed and seeing Christmas arrive for others and a hamper for oneself.

The fight against poverty and social injustice has always been at the core of my political involvement. In the light of the devastating effects of poverty and the Liberals' lack of will to resolve it, we must work even harder to get this House to do everything to remedy the injustices that have been continuing for too long.

The proposed amendments to the Canadian Human Rights Act represent a significant milestone. As the Canadian Human Rights Commission noted in its 1997 annual report:

It is now time to recognize poverty as a human rights issue here at home as well.

[English]

Ms. Louise Hardy (Yukon, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to support Bill S-11. Although I may not agree with the ideology of having a Senate or with the Progressive Conservative Party, I am proud to stand to support this bill.

This bill is about our Canadian Human Rights Act. Human rights are our finest instincts, our best wishes, our dreams and our visions for now and the future. This is about how we will change this country to make it better; take what is good and make it solid; take the weak parts, look at them and change them to make them better and to bring some life to this act.

Canada has always been a place where we could succeed on our merit, work and determination. Everything is here. It does not matter if we are born poor. We have public schools. We have health care. We have homes. We can do whatever we want in this country. For us to have to step back and look at the fact of social conditions which generally refers to the poor as being an obstacle to anyone accomplishing their dreams is really shocking.

Private Members' Business

• (1900)

I will give an example. My mother had eleven children. Three died. My father died when I was young. We were poor. That meant there were days when there was no food. That meant there were nights when there was no heat. In the north when it is minus 30 or minus 40, living without heat is no joke. That means living in a room with all your brothers and sisters, every coat in the house piled on top of you and you are praying that somehow you can get some money for food or to get some oil or wood for your house. Poverty is not a lifestyle. It is not anything anyone chooses.

My mother was of a generation that went through the war and they wanted change. They wanted this country to be here for every child, whether born poor or rich. They had an opportunity. They fought for it and made changes.

If there was no public school, I would not have had an education. If there was no subsidized secondary school, I would not have been able to accomplish that. I certainly would not have been able to make it to this House.

As our country recedes in the support we are willing to give to the poor, it means more and more people will be born poor and they will stay poor.

In the last 10 years we have seen family income go down by 5%. Twenty-one percent of our families are low income. Sixty percent of single mothers are poor. There has been a 47% growth in the number of children living in poverty. For me these are not just words, they are not statistics. I know what it feels like and I know what children are going through when they live in poverty.

If my mother were alive I would never bring up the fact that we were poor because it was a matter of shame. For this woman it meant absolute shame that she would have to beg for food for her children, which is what she had to do. She had to go to a food bank. It was not called a food bank at that time but that is what it was.

Adding this social condition to our human rights act is important. It is important because it says of the country that we care enough to think about poverty. We care enough to want to say it, to trench it and to make change that will make a difference for the people in this country.

We can do it. I think all Canadians want that. We want to make sure we have health care, education and housing. We want to help those who are in between jobs, those who lose jobs, to make sure employment insurance is there for them when they need it so they do not have to go on social assistance, they do not have to be degraded every day they are without a job because we place a lot of value and worth in being able to work and support our families.

Poverty increases depression, malnutrition, sickness and early death. I was poor but I was never without a roof over my head. I

cannot imagine living without a home, yet more and more we are seeing people without a blanket or roof of any sort over their heads.

The changes that have gone on in our country in the last 10 years have meant that education is farther and farther out of the reach of ordinary people, certainly out of the reach of the poor.

We have public schools to send children to. If someone cannot afford a school book or running shoes for their children, they certainly cannot afford a musical instrument or sporting equipment for their children to participate in the social life of their community.

It is a human rights issue. It is an issue on dignity. Even though there may be reasons not to include this social condition in the human rights act because it would take a bit of time, it might affect other laws or institutions that we are not sure of, it does not mean we should not do it.

I know my Reform colleague said we could force banks to give a loan to someone who cannot pay it back. That is not the case at all. That would not happen. But we could expect a bank to cash the cheque of a poor working person. I know of quite a few instances where banks refused to cash their cheques.

A woodcutter in Yukon received his payment from the government because he delivered wood to people on social assistance. This man would receive his cheque from the government. His working clothes were torn and dirty because that was the nature of his work. He did not have a bank account and the bank refused to cash his cheque. Why? Because he was poor. Fortunately in this country we are lucky enough to have more rich people than poor people, but more and more people are becoming poor. We need to make changes in public policy to make sure the elements that cause poverty are not there and we also have to recognize the indignity of living in poverty.

• (1905)

We need not multiply the suffering of people in this country in word or in deed. If we exclude poor people from our human rights act then we are indeed heaping more indignity on those who are poor. We also have to realize the aboriginal people of our country are the poorest of the poor. By taking this step forward we would be recognizing their suffering which is far greater than most of ours.

I support this motion and I sincerely hope we will move for change.

Mr. Mark Muise (West Nova, PC): Madam Speaker, it is with great sorrow that I rise in the House to debate Bill S-11, an act to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act to add social condition as a prohibited ground of discrimination.

I say with great sorrow because as we continue to debate the merits of this very important piece of legislation millions of Canadians are still struggling to survive while living in poverty.

Private Members' Business

[Translation]

Based on figures for 1996, the UN report shows that 17.6% of Canadians, including 20.9% of our children, live in poverty; Canada ranks 10th out of 17 industrialized countries.

[English]

Putting all political differences aside, the fact is there are over 1.5 million children living in poverty in Canada. For such an affluent country to have such a horrendous record when it comes to poverty is truly unacceptable.

[Translation]

The Prime Minister himself said this was unacceptable, yet he is not doing anything to change the situation. I am not sure that the government grasps how dangerous it is for a society to have so many young people living in poverty. These children are part of our future and, unless we find a way to deal with this threat, a whole generation of Canadians may end up alone, rejected and poor.

[English]

It is well understood that children who are the products of families living in extreme poverty have significantly less opportunity to succeed than those who were fortunate enough to grow up in a more prosperous environment.

[Translation]

For those living in daily poverty, the possibility of a prosperous future is almost unimaginable. Every day, I receive calls from people facing the misery of poverty, and it seems the problem is not getting better but worse.

[English]

The prevalence of poverty within this country has grown in leaps and bounds in the past few decades. Food banks, which were nowhere to be found in the 1970s, now number in the thousands and can be found in 450 communities. Compounding the problem is the fact that affordable and adequate housing has now become a full blown crisis. Almost 400,000 Canadians live in substandard housing.

All Canadians deserve an equal opportunity to succeed in our society. However, this is unfortunately not the case.

Despite the often recognizable characteristics of poverty, there is another obstacle that is often less recognizable or understood by members of the general public but which is an unfortunate part of their everyday life.

I am referring to the prevalent discrimination these individuals are forced to live with on a daily basis. In addition to having to endure the material hardships that accompany poverty, poor Canadians are always having to face ostracism and negative stereotyp-

ing, particularly in dealing with financial institutions, as my hon. colleague from the NDP just mentioned, businesses and their staff, officials, the legal system, neighbours, strangers and the media.

• (1910)

Let us face it, as a society we are often very intolerant of the poor. This is why Bill S-11 is important. The Canadian Human Rights Act recognizes that some people within our society are vulnerable and must be protected against discrimination.

The Canadian Human Rights Act distinctly prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, marital status, family status, disability and sexual orientation.

Bill S-11 is simply asking that we ensure explicit recognition of poverty and its related attributes, such as being a welfare recipient, and to prohibit discrimination against the poor in areas under federal jurisdiction.

Adding social condition to the list of prohibited grounds of discrimination in sections 2 and 3.1 of the act will finally recognize a huge segment of our society that has been marginalized. It will provide it with the same protection presently offered to other groups within Canadian society.

[Translation]

The poor have nobody to protect them from the injustice of society, which too often wants to close its eyes to the reality of poverty. It is vital that these individuals be given protection under the Charter.

[English]

It seems that each day I hear horror stories of welfare recipients being unfairly treated when seeking essential services. I have been told of chartered banks that refuse to cash welfare recipient cheques because of insufficient pieces of ID. Others have been denied the right to open their own bank account.

Landlords, utility companies, the legal system and even the media routinely discriminate against the poor either by refusing them services or by providing them with inadequate service.

Our justice minister's response to Bill S-11 is to wait and to explore other problems that might exist in the human rights act before considering implementation or implementing social condition in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Those living in poverty have been waiting for this government to implement these changes for years. They can no longer afford to wait for this government to take poverty seriously. Something has to be done immediately to try to address some of their immediate problems.

This government's answer to many of the problems facing Canadians is to wait and study the situation further, hoping the problems will eventually go away on their own.

Private Members' Business

Most recently, this Liberal strategy has come to light with the justice minister's decision to ignore calls to have the child pornography decision referred to the Canadian supreme court. The justice minister would rather let this case proceed through a lengthy appeal process than come to the defence of defenceless children.

The federal agriculture minister as well was aware of a farm income crisis when he was first appointed as minister over 18 months ago, yet he chose to do nothing about it until this country was faced with the distinct possibility of losing thousands of our farmers to bankruptcy.

Those living in poverty cannot afford any further delays from this insensitive government. Action must be taken immediately so that we can offer renewed hope to those less fortunate.

Bill S-11 was initially introduced and passed in the other place by Senator Cohen. Since then, both she and my caucus colleague, the member for Shefford, have worked diligently with concerned citizens and fellow MPs representing all political stripes to try to remedy this huge injustice that weighs so heavily against those who are most vulnerable in our society.

I ask all hon. members to please not turn their backs on those who need us the most. Help protect the millions of Canadians living in poverty. Help eliminate discrimination that is presently based on their social condition by supporting Bill S-11.

• (1915)

Mr. Wayne Easter (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I support the essence and spirit behind Bill S-11, an amendment to the Canadian Human Rights Act to add social condition as a protected ground under the act.

I believe that the drafters of Bill S-11 intended it to provide protection to the poor, to prohibit discrimination based on economic discrimination. That is laudable and should be supported by members. How could we do otherwise?

My concern is not with the object and aim of Bill S-11, but rather with an overly broad and confusing nature of the exact wording. Simply using an open-ended term such as "social condition" I believe will add confusion to the act that will result in an endless sea of litigation.

Imagine the hay day the lawyers would have with this kind of wording. Maybe there are too many lawyers in the Senate. I will give an example in terms of the remarks made by the hon. member of the Conservative party. He talked about this government waiting and studying. That is not the case at all. Where has he been since 1993? Look at the budgets and look at what we have done in those

budgets for training, education and other things in trying to grapple with these problems.

The hon. member mentioned the Minister of Justice and the child pornography issue. We believe in due process on this side. We do not believe in using the notwithstanding clause every time a judge makes a ridiculous decision.

Then the member talked about the minister of agriculture and the farm crisis. It is a little off topic, but I think I should correct him. The point I am trying to make is that the broad term of social condition could be given all kinds of different interpretations.

I think the House can see from my explanation how wrong the member opposite is in terms of how he views some of the things this government is doing.

The minister of agriculture acted very quickly prior to Christmas. In fact, one of the problems that the minister of agriculture has is getting the Progressive Conservative government on side in Manitoba to pick up its share of the funding so that those cheques can get to the farm community.

Mr. Roy Bailey: What about Saskatchewan?

Mr. Wayne Easter: The member opposite asks about Saskatchewan. I understand that finally the premier of Saskatchewan has come through this afternoon and is going to pay its 40% share. That of course is due to the good persuasive powers of our minister of agriculture and our Prime Minister in having them come to the table to do what needs to be done to support the farm community.

I want to get back to the issue at hand, Bill S-11. As I said, simply using an open-ended term such as social condition will add confusion to the act that will result in an endless sea of litigation. I want to re-emphasize that point.

If we are serious about assisting the poor and the disadvantaged in our society, then we must create opportunities for jobs. That is what this government has been doing. We must lower unemployment. That is what this government has been doing. We must provide education. Look at the last two budgets. Look at the millennium scholarship fund about which hon. members opposite are so critical.

We must provide training and we must provide the necessities of life so people will be able to participate as full and equal partners in our society. We must provide a remedy through our human rights legislation for prejudicial treatment of the poor in a manner that makes that protection meaningful.

This year we are celebrating the 50th anniversary of the UN declaration on human rights. It is a fitting time to review our current human rights legislation to ensure that it protects the most

vulnerable in our society. In Canada we have honoured our commitment to the declaration for 50 years.

• (1920)

What does the declaration say on economic rights? Article 25 states:

Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself (herself) and of her/his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widow, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond her/his control.

Recently the United Nations in its Human Rights Development Index Report gave Canada top marks as being the best place to live based on 1995 data. I believe that Canada received a high rating because Canadians take our commitment to human rights very seriously.

I believe, Madam Speaker, that you are indicating I am out of time. Maybe I can conclude my remarks at a later date.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): The hon. member will have approximately four minutes remaining the next time this bill is before the House.

[Translation]

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.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

[English]

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

TRANSPORT

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, PC): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Parliament Secretary to the Minister of Transport. It is further to a question that I asked in the House to which the minister responded that the province of Nova Scotia and the province of New Brunswick, in particular, did not violate an agreement.

Since that time, through the access to information program, we have become aware of another letter in which the minister said to the province of New Brunswick that it could charge tolls on this federally funded highway under two conditions. The first condition was that the amount of the federal contribution would still have to be cost shared with the province on a 50:50 basis. The second

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condition was that any revenue from the tolls would be an additional source of funds to be dedicated solely to the project in question.

I sent to the parliamentary secretary a quote from *Hansard* wherein the minister of finance for New Brunswick said "We had always made it clear that the provincial money we invested in these sections of road would be recovered". That totally contradicts the minister's letter which says that the province must maintain its cost share ratio of 50:50 on this highway. There is a contradiction. The province has totally contradicted the words of the federal minister.

With respect to the second condition, the minister said that any revenue from the tolls must be totally dedicated to the project in question. Again I sent to the parliamentary secretary a newspaper article which quoted the premier of the province of New Brunswick as saying "Yes, there is some money coming back and it will be applied to health care". They used the figure of \$321 million. Again the federal minister said that all the revenue from the highway must go to the project. The province now says it is going to health care or general revenues or whatever.

I ask the parliamentary secretary to address this letter and the absolutely unambiguous statements and conditions that the minister applied to the province of New Brunswick if it was going to charge tolls on a federally funded highway: that is, that the province must maintain its share, which it has not, and that the province must dedicate all the revenue to that specific project, which it has not.

Mr. Wayne Easter (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague asked earlier about New Brunswick taxpayers in relation to paying tolls for highways and where the money was going.

The member certainly knows that we on this side will investigate every morsel of information that he has put before us because we want to be clear and articulate in what we say. He does understand the issue.

Under the Constitution of Canada highways are a provincial responsibility.

• (1925)

In the instance of the new Fredericton to Moncton highway, the federal government did contribute a portion of the highway's overall costs. New Brunswick has chosen to operate the new highway as a public-private partnership with the Maritime Road Development Corporation using tolls.

The hon. member should note that the Government of New Brunswick has indicated that the federal contribution was already deducted against the cost base used to establish the tolls and the

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annual provincial payment for the remaining capital costs. In effect, the federal funds have reduced the overall capital costs to this project for New Brunswick taxpayers.

The concerns raised about tolls and federal contributions certainly deserve further study. We will grant the member that Transport Canada as usual is providing some leadership in developing a future policy on tolls in the event the federal government were to launch a new national highway program.

However, with respect to the hon. member's allegation of inappropriate federal spending, I would like to quote directly from the auditor general's report: "We found in all the negotiated agreements that the program objectives, funding levels and cost sharing ratios to be maintained throughout the life of the agreement reflected the government's directives".

HIGHWAYS

Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, PC): Madam Speaker, I am up on the same topic and the same question to the minister. I hope that I do not get the same reply from the parliamentary secretary. He is dodging the real question of what happened to that federal money when the agreement was broken by the province of New Brunswick. That is the big unanswered question in this House.

The only thing I can agree with in terms of what the parliamentary secretary said is that the federal government is examining future agreements. It has admitted that this agreement was violated. It goes beyond the violation of the agreement that upsets me.

The agreement was made by the former Minister of Transport in this House, a man by the name of Doug Young. He now happens to be the chairman of the Maritime Road Development Corporation, MRDC. His company is taking control of what is truly a provincial constitutional issue. His company will determine the weights on that highway, the tolls on that highway and the maintenance on that highway. Basically, the province of New Brunswick has abrogated its responsibilities. The feds are sitting back here nodding their heads in agreement, protecting their old friend, Doug Young.

That is wrong because at the end of the day it is going to cost the citizens, the taxpayers of the province of New Brunswick more money than if they had built the highway themselves. This is ridiculous.

There is also another difficulty in terms of transportation. It now costs one single truck \$20,000 a year to use that highway if it is used 365 days a year. That is a \$20,000 increase in the operation of just one vehicle.

They have sat back and allowed them to set those tolls which is absolutely indisputably wrong. We are asking for a correction. We

are also asking for leadership in this House from the Minister of Transport to renege on that type of an agreement and to take the province of New Brunswick to task on that type of agreement.

It is double jeopardy for taxpayers. The toll payers and the taxpayers are one and the same person. Why should they pay twice for the same piece of highway? The only reason they are going to pay twice is because it is going into the hind pocket of their friend, Doug Young, the former Minister of Transport, who set the deal in motion right here in this House. They reneged on their own signature.

The premier of New Brunswick is finally admitting that there is going to be money coming off this deal. Where is it going? It is going into what they consider their own little fund but it has nothing to do with paying off that highway and kicking Doug Young and the rest of them out of the deal.

That is what we want to see happen: leadership at the federal level. Anyone who can stand in the House to defend Doug Young does not understand how this toll highway works.

• (1930)

We are asking again for leadership from the federal level to make sure deals like this one do not happen in the future. Taxpayers can only stand so much punishment and this is extraordinary punishment brought on by a Minister of Transport who does not dare to stand up to his old friend.

Mr. Wayne Easter (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I sometimes think this is supposed to be the House of reason, but we had quite a rant against an honourable former member of this House. He used the word ridiculous and I would say to the hon. member opposite that the charges he is laying are in fact ridiculous. He has no basis on which to make those charges against the particular individual.

I will quote again from the auditor general's report.

We found in all the negotiated agreements that the program objectives, funding levels and cost sharing ratios to be maintained throughout the life of the agreements reflected the government's objectives.

I said in an earlier response, and I do believe this is important, we recognize that we do not want to face a system of tolls right across Canada. The concerns raised about tolls and federal contributions deserve further study. Transport Canada is developing a future policy on tolls in the event that the federal government were to launch a new national highway program.

The member charged that the company of which Doug Young is a member is doing all these things that he resents. I cannot recall them all. Really the provincial government decides on its alignment, design, construction, standards, tendering process and financing, as well as subsequent operations and maintenance.

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If the hon. member is suggesting in his remarks that tolls create an interprovincial trade barrier, the agreement on international trade has an established process under which a province—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): I am afraid the time has expired.

The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7.33 p.m.)

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