



CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Wednesday, December 15, 1999**

**Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, December 15, 1999

The House met at 2 p.m.

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*Prayers*

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• (1400)

**The Speaker:** As is our practice on Wednesday we will now sing O Canada. The hon. member for Kingston and the Islands and a choir from Kingston and the Islands will lead us in the singing of our national anthem. This is only the fourth group that has ever led us in O Canada in our House.

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

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

*[English]*

### CHILDREN

**Ms. Jean Augustine (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Christmas season is a time of joy and happiness for many Canadian children, yet for one unknown young child this will not be the case. Last Tuesday the people of Etobicoke—Lakeshore were shocked to learn that the body of an unidentified child was found dismembered in Colonel Samuel Smith Park, a local park.

The death of this child is an example of the kind of violence that, when perpetrated, affects us all. Our communities will not be whole or functional until we can identify this child and find the perpetrators. The lives of our children are too precious not to warrant our protection.

As we mourn the tragic death of this child let us take the time to reflect and take action on the things that threaten children's lives. We must work to ensure that children are safe in Etobicoke—Lakeshore and in all communities across our great country.

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### TAXATION

**Mr. John Cummins (Delta—South Richmond, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, Santa Claus announced today that he will be moving his

entire Canadian operation to the South Pole early next year. The reason? The excessively high taxes imposed by this Liberal government.

An obviously distraught Claus told a packed news conference that all aspects of his operation are overtaxed and that he is simply not prepared to pay any more. "It is becoming increasingly impossible to get the elves to work overtime", said Claus. "Liberal payroll taxes rip their paycheques in half".

"The excessive burden of provincial taxes, federal excise taxes and the GST are driving the price of reindeer fuel out of sight", said R. N. Reindeer, chief of Claus' transportation division. "Our accountants say the best way to escape the Liberals' juggernaut is to move to the South Pole and to operate Santa's sleigh under a Liberian flag of convenience".

"Our agenda has always been a children's agenda", said a tearful Mrs. Claus. "Once Liberal taxes have shut us down, who are the kids going to write to at Christmastime, Revenue Canada?"

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*[Translation]*

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**Mr. Jacques Saada (Brossard—La Prairie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have some good news, very good news, for the Gaspé region.

On December 13, the Minister of National Revenue and Secretary of State responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec announced that the Conseil de développement économique de Murdochville will be receiving a contribution of \$377,000 for four prefeasibility studies aimed at determining the most promising areas for investment.

This is one of a series of measures undertaken by the Government of Canada in the past 24 months within the region. Some \$28 million have been injected into programs specifically designed for the Gaspé—Îles-de-la-Madeleine region.

I should point out as well that an envelope of \$20 million is still available for productive projects.

This is just one more fine example of the Government of Canada's concrete support to the process of restructuring the economy of the Gaspé—Îles-de-la-Madeleine region.

*S. O. 31*

### THE LATE CLAUDE HARDY

**Mr. Claude Drouin (Beauce, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, a great friend of amateur sport in Canada passed away on December 3 at the age of 59.

Claude Hardy was an athlete, a coach, an administrator and a TV commentator. He made his mark as a weightlifter in Quebec and in Canada, and on the world scene as well, participating in the 1968 and 1972 Olympic Games. Today we pay tribute in particular to his devotion to young athletes.

• (1405)

He was involved in several editions of the Canada Games as an athlete, a coach and leader of the Quebec delegation.

At each future edition of the Canada Games, the Claude Hardy award will be given in his memory to a delegation member demonstrating the same qualities as this great man, who left us far too soon.

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[*English*]

### LITERACY

**Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we live in the most connected country in the world on the threshold of the 21st century. Yet, 22% of Canadians have difficulty reading commonly available material and another 26% have limited reading skills.

Whether we realize it or not, each of us knows at least one adult who cannot read. This is not a matter of immigrants having problems with their second or third language; this is a problem that affects all corners of Canadian society.

While we must keep up with the high tech aspects of the global village in which we live, we must also support focusing energy and resources to improve literacy levels across the country.

I urge all members to support the National Literacy Secretariat. The secretariat and its partners deserve our support.

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### THE LATE VICTOR QUELCH

**Mr. David Chatters (Athabasca, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to make amends to an oversight from many years gone by.

Mr. Victor Quelch was a member of parliament from 1935 to 1958. In those 23 years he served as Social Credit member for the constituency of Acadia in southern Alberta. He was a very well regarded member of this House and served many roles, including chief critic for finance, agriculture and fisheries. In 1950 he was appointed by Prime Minister St. Laurent to serve as an adviser on the Canadian staff to the United Nations Assembly.

Before entering politics Mr. Quelch served in World War I and received the Military Cross for bravery.

A sense of duty to his country and its citizens guided Mr. Quelch's entire life, yet when he passed away in 1975 a tribute was never held in his honour in this House.

Although it is long overdue, I would like to acknowledge the service and dedication of Mr. Quelch. His contributions to Canada may be long past but they are certainly not forgotten.

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### CANADA

**Mr. Hec Clouthier (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it was my privilege to represent Canada at the 55th anniversary of D-Day in Normandy this June. It was chosen as the number one Canadian news event of the century. I am proud to share my birthday with Pierre Elliott Trudeau. He was chosen as the number one Canadian newsmaker of the century.

These people moved Canada and the world. Few of us will have the greatness to bend history itself, but each and every one of us must work hard to change a small portion of events. In the totality of all those acts will be written the history of this generation. Each time a person stands for an ideal and acts to improve the lot of others or strikes out against an injustice, he or she sends forth a tiny ripple of hope.

It is my fervent hope, as MP for the great riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, that we pass the torch to the next generation, knowing in our hearts and in our minds that we have not failed our families, our friends or our country.

The success story called Canada will continue to illuminate the universe into the next millennium.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

### YOUNG OFFENDERS

**Mr. Michel Bellehumeur (Berthier—Montcalm, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Coalition pour la justice des mineurs, which is a coalition of Quebec agencies working with young offenders, recently submitted its brief to members of this House. Here is an excerpt from that document:

The constant decrease in youth crime and the positive results achieved by the provinces that implement all the components of the Young Offenders Act should convince Canadians, provided they are adequately informed, that the implementation of Bill C-3 would be a costly and useless measure.

Where are the supposed protectors of Quebec's interests in the Liberal caucus? Unfortunately, Liberal members from Quebec continue to turn a deaf ear to the message sent by those who have been defending Quebec's expertise for decades.

The Bloc Quebecois is the only party sensible enough to oppose this unjustified panic among the Liberals, who would rather upstage the Reformers when it comes to juvenile crime.

Youth justice is faced with a strange problem. The federal government stubbornly refuses to put its trust in the youth justice system, when it should be doing everything it can to support that system.

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[English]

#### SANDRINE'S GIFT OF LIFE

**Mr. Ian Murray (Lanark—Carleton, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, last May the national capital region was touched by the tragic death of 11 year old Sandrine Craig in a school bus accident. Friends of her family launched an intense two week organ donor awareness campaign following the Craig's decision to donate Sandrine's organs, an act which greatly enhanced the lives of six people.

• (1410)

Today "Sandrine's Gift of Life" was launched as a national donor awareness campaign. Volunteers working out of the eastern Ontario branch of the Kidney Foundation of Canada will head the campaign and the Association of Canadian Community Colleges will organize local campaigns through their colleges, extending into 900 communities across Canada. Through this campaign family members will be encouraged to share their wishes and to encourage others to do the same. This campaign will touch and benefit millions of Canadians.

I encourage all Canadians to consider signing an organ donor card so that a tragic loss such as that faced by Sandrine's family may offer hope to other families.

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#### SANDRINE'S GIFT OF LIFE

**Mr. Grant Hill (Macleod, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, during my years in medical practice I dealt regularly with the tragedy of unexpected death, the grieving, the tears and the anguish. The story I relate today is bittersweet.

It starts with the tragic loss of Sandrine, an 11 year old girl killed near Ottawa. Her family showed enormous courage by consenting to her organs being donated to help sick sufferers. They then went further with a community organ donation program that enjoyed remarkable success.

Today, with support from the Kidney Foundation, the Association of Canadian Community Colleges, broadcaster Don Cherry and the Speaker of this House, a national organ donor awareness campaign was launched. I will be personally signing my own organ

donor card. I encourage every member of parliament to sign on as an example to the rest of Canada.

"Sandrine's Gift of Life"—what a fitting legacy.

\* \* \*

#### CHARMAINE CROOKS

**Ms. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it gives me much pleasure to rise in the House today to pay tribute to Charmaine Crooks, holder of 11 Canadian track records and medalist in the Commonwealth and Pan Am Games. She was a silver medal winner in the 4x400 relay at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics and the Canadian Olympic team flag bearer at the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta.

This past week Ms. Crooks joins nine other IOC athlete commission members to be elected voting members of the International Olympic Committee. She was a member of the committee that spawned the World Anti-Doping Agency and the reform commission that has pushed for transparency and accountability in the international Olympic movement.

At 37 Ms. Crooks has become a professional singer and television host since ending her long and outstanding competitive running career. She is respected throughout Canada and the world for her dedicated efforts, speaking on behalf of all athletes.

I know that all hon. members will join me in congratulating Charmaine Crooks and wishing her all the best in her continuing quest to make sure that athletes' interests remain front and centre.

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#### HALIFAX PORT AUTHORITY

**Mr. Gordon Earle (Halifax West, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Halifax port is in danger of losing its competitive edge in the international shipping industry. Hundreds of jobs are on the line, as well as millions of dollars in revenue, and an international reputation is at stake.

The Halifax Port Authority recently demanded several changes to its 30 year tenant, Halterm, including a 900% increase in rent. I am concerned that the port authority may be taking an adversarial approach. The federal government appointed the board of the authority and I ask that the government ensure that the authority acts in the best interests of the port, our community and our region. The federal government has a duty to take a leadership role in this matter and ensure that the long term interests of the port of Halifax are upheld.

I urge the government to ensure that it does everything possible to facilitate renewed negotiations in an atmosphere of mutual co-operation, not conflict. The people of the Halifax region deserve no less.

*Oral Questions*

[Translation]

**MINISTER OF INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Gérard Asselin (Charlevoix, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs just will not give up. He uses every possible platform to say that the federal system is flexible and evolving. For example, on Thursday, the minister stated his views on the evolution of federalism.

What a disappointment. Not only did the minister discuss the issue of a clear majority in a confusing manner, he also had the nerve to say that the federalist status quo is working just fine.

We want to set the record straight by reminding the minister that a recent poll conducted by the research and information centre on Canada, or CRIC, shows that only 13% of Quebecers support the status quo.

Another poll tells us that 60% are unhappy with the division of powers between Ottawa and Quebec. Worse still, another poll commissioned by the minister's own department indicates that 62% of Quebecers disagree with the statement that the situation is improving in Canada.

The Canadian system—

**The Speaker:** I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member.

\* \* \*

• (1415)

[English]

**THE LATE JIM BALFOUR**

**Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon—Souris, PC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to mourn the loss of one of our colleagues from the Senate who also spent seven years on this side of the House as a member of parliament.

I speak of the passing of Senator Jim Balfour on Sunday at the age of 71. The Saskatchewan senator died after a long fought battle with cancer. He lived a life marked by more than one personal tragedy, including the untimely loss of several close members of his family.

Senator Balfour served on this side of the House after winning a seat in Regina as a Progressive Conservative member of parliament in 1972 and was re-elected in 1974. Under Joe Clark's government Mr. Balfour was appointed to the Senate in 1979 where he served for 20 years.

His tireless work on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan speaks for itself. Jim will be remembered both in his private and public life and the vast body of work he has left behind. He will greatly missed by all in the Progressive Conservative Party.

On behalf of the national caucus and leader of our party, I wish to extend my deepest condolences and sympathy to his family and to all those who knew him.

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**CHRISTMAS GREETINGS**

**Mr. Paul Bonwick (Simcoe—Grey, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to offer Christmas greetings to all Canadians.

This is the most precious time of year to spend with loved ones, enjoy the Christmas spirit and, most important, enjoy the company of family. However there are many who are less fortunate, not able to celebrate this festive season let alone have a decent meal. There are young children going without toys.

We can make a difference. I ask my colleagues from all parties to join me and encourage their constituents to give to the many food banks and toy drives taking place in this great land. We should remember as we celebrate the birth of Christ that we should also celebrate this day with a true spirit of giving.

I want to take this opportunity, on behalf of the constituents of Simcoe—Grey, the Bonwick family and the 15 uncles and aunts visiting Ottawa today, to wish everyone in the House a very merry Christmas and a happy new year.

**ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**

[English]

**GOVERNMENT GRANTS**

**Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, merry Christmas too, but there is a merry Christmas going on with René Fugère right now. He is probably finishing up his Christmas card list and I bet there is a beauty in there for the Prime Minister.

He can afford to send a nice one because of the \$11,500 payback he got from arranging \$100,000 in federal grants to, you guessed it, Mr. Speaker, the Grand-Mère inn through the Prime Minister's Office. That is pretty good return on your money; it is better than most mutual funds.

Does the Prime Minister see nothing wrong with one of his federal riding executives getting this kind of kickback from a federal grant?

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh.

**The Speaker:** The question is in order but I would ask members to stay away from the word kickback, for today anyhow.

**Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let us look at the particular project. First,

it occurred in an area of high unemployment. The project was recommended and supported by all local partners: the provincial government, the local caisse populaire, la Fédération des travailleurs du Québec solidarity fund, the group forces of private sector investment and the Banque de développement du Canada.

All these partners supported the investment of money which did not flow until the appropriate approval process was undertaken. Nineteen jobs were expected to be created and nineteen jobs are there.

**Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Ref.):** Thanks anyway, Mr. Speaker, but when it comes to being a Liberal person in Shawinigan I think membership has its rewards.

Fugère's rewards are not just limited to that \$11,500. He is the same fellow who is being investigated by the RCMP right now for breaking the Lobbyist Registration Act. The Prime Minister knows it. Why would that be? It would be for his efforts on behalf of three other companies in the Prime Minister's riding.

We see a little pattern. The Prime Minister keeps Fugère on his gravy train. Does he see nothing wrong with that?

**Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member already knows that investigations with respect to the Lobbyists Registration Act were initiated as a result of newspaper reports. I am sure the hon. member would very much like to wait until she hears the results of that investigation before casting such aspersions.

**Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I think the only person who could answer should answer. What we need is clarity.

Let us put this in perspective again. The Grand-Mère inn gets a \$100,000 cheque from the federal government. Just 10 days later that same inn writes an \$11,500 cheque to a member of the Prime Minister's riding executive with a known ability to, let us just say, negotiate the winning conditions.

• (1420)

Does the Prime Minister approve of all his riding executive getting such cash, or does Fugère just have special status?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am very happy when entrepreneurs in my riding are creating jobs. I am doing my job as a member of parliament. Mr. Fugère never worked for me and has never been on the executive of my riding.

**Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, it is not the entrepreneurs we are worried about. It is people with close ties to the Prime Minister.

Four days before the last election René Fugère attended a press conference on behalf of the Prime Minister. He represented the

Prime Minister at the conference to announce this very grant for this very hotel. In fact he spoke on behalf of the Prime Minister. Obviously the Prime Minister knew all about the deal with the Grand-Mère hotel.

The Prime Minister loves to take credit for all the grants he doles out in Shawinigan, but will the Prime Minister take responsibility for the particular grant?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I repeat again that yes, I have worked for my riding. I am happy to report to the House of Commons that some years ago the Saint-Maurice Valley had the highest unemployment in the land. It is no longer the case because they have a very good member of parliament working for them.

**Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is still trying to dispute the old headline in the 1993 election "Elect Me and I will be Santa Claus". The facts stand for themselves.

The Grand-Mère hotel gets \$100,000 in federal government grants. The Grand-Mère hotel then turns over more than \$11,000 to the person who represents the Prime Minister at the press conference to announce that very grant, the same guy who is under investigation for three other grants that he obtained illegally because he is not a registered lobbyist.

The Prime Minister is well aware of the pattern that is developing. There is a new one every week. Why is it that he finds it so hard to step in and stop what is going on in Shawinigan?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, if I were to take the time of the House to list all the ridings of the Reform Party that have benefited from the same program of the federal government, I would probably take all of question period.

I will say to the House of Commons and to the member who asked the question that I will keep working for my riding as long as the level of unemployment is higher than in Alberta.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### BILL C-20

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs said "if no one in this country any longer threatens others with the possibility of separation". That clarifies the debate.

Behind the grand speeches and expounding on democracy, this bill is nothing more than an attempt to silence the democratic expression of the Quebec people.

Will the Prime Minister admit that by wishing to be the sole arbiter of the clarity of the question and the clarity of the result, he

*Oral Questions*

is giving advance confirmation in the bill of his real intention, which is to deny the right of Quebecers to decide their own future?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, what we are seeking is honesty and clarity. We want people to know exactly what to expect.

If the Bloc Québécois wants to respect the opinion of Quebecers, it should note that yesterday two other polls clearly confirmed that over 70% of Quebecers want no more referendums in Quebec.

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, if the Prime Minister wants to talk about honesty and clarity when it comes to polls—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh.

**The Speaker:** Order, please. I ask you not to use the word honesty too often today. The leader of the Bloc Québécois.

• (1425)

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe:** Mr. Speaker, I would have liked you to address your remark to the Prime Minister. It would have been clearer.

The Prime Minister does not understand the difference between 1982 and the present situation. He can no longer count on a majority of docile members from Quebec to legitimize his bill, any more than he can count on Quebec's support, because two-thirds of the members from Quebec in this House are opposed to his bill.

In the circumstances, will he be clear and honest enough to tell us that there is no legitimate justification for his bill?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, since we are speaking of clarity, I could perhaps read the following quote in the House "The court spells it out; it does not want the decision to be ambiguous, and the purpose of the ruling is to ensure that the decision is truly based on an accurate understanding of the situation—that the process takes place very clearly and transparently, that the undertakings are clear, and that naturally the question is clear as well".

This was what Lucien Bouchard said on August 21, 1998.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh.

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

**Mr. Daniel Turp (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs has been very unreasonable over the past few days.

Yesterday, he let it slip that the purpose of his bill is to prevent any new referendum in Quebec. The Minister said "—no one in this country any longer threatens others with the possibility of separation".

Will the minister finally admit that his legislation is nothing but a new padlock act, an act to put a lock on Quebec's future?

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, everyone can check and see how the Bloc Québécois distorted my comments.

One simply has to look at the transcripts of Oral Question Period, in yesterday's *Hansard*. I said "—we have improved Canada in a variety of ways and will continue to do so. We will be able to do so even better if no one in this country any longer threatens others with the possibility of separation".

This is what I said and I see nothing outrageous about it. The question did not even deal with the bill. It related to the memory of my father and it was despicable.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh.

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

**Mr. Daniel Turp (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, we will again quote the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, because he was even clearer on Friday, in replying to a question from the hon. member for Macleod.

Again, I am quoting the minister "We Quebecers will never lose Canada in confusion, nor will we lose it in clarity".

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh.

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

**Mr. Daniel Turp:** Mr. Speaker, I would appreciate it if members opposite would listen to the whole quote "We Quebecers will never lose Canada in confusion, nor will we lose it in clarity". This is from the minister.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh.

**The Speaker:** Order, please. I ask the hon. member to please put his question.

• (1430)

**Mr. Daniel Turp:** Mr. Speaker, if this were the comic strip *Astérix*, we would say "These Romans are crazy".

Will the minister be reasonable for once and admit that his only goal is to keep Quebec in Canada at any cost, even by restricting the freedom of Quebecers?

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, first I thank the hon. member for making me smile



again. Second, this clarity bill should not be threatening to anyone. Who is afraid of clarity?

We believe that if things are clear, Quebecers will always choose to remain Canadians. Should we be wrong, then this legislation will be there to help us overcome the tremendous difficulties that would result from negotiating secession.

It is in everyone's interest, including separatists, to realize that secession can only be negotiated in clarity.

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[English]

### HEALTH CARE

**Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, here is what people are reading about health care in today's newspapers: crowded emergency rooms, stretcher-bound waits for beds and ambulances roaming city streets searching for hospitals to take their patients. That is the rule not the exception in Canadian health care these days.

Does the federal Minister of Health accept his share of responsibility for the harm done to health care or is he just going to continue to blame the provinces?

**Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am working very hard with those provinces. I am working with every minister of health in the country to find solutions for the long term, to address the very issues that the member mentioned in her question, to deal with the crowded emergency rooms, the waiting lists and the shortages.

As recently as last September, all the ministers of health agreed on priorities that we are working toward together to get that job done. It includes increased money from the federal government, money that we substantially increased last February in the budget. We will continue in that vein.

**Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, that is great rhetoric from the health minister, but he knows perfectly well that for every dollar cut this government will return 50 cents, if that, and home care has been completely forgotten. What that means is that hospitals are backed right up to the emergency rooms.

A Toronto emergency room nurse put it bluntly, "Christmas is going to be a disaster for people needing health care".

Is the minister content to preside over more hallway medicine or will he deliver on home care as promised?

**Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we are delivering. As we speak, governments are working together to map out home care for the future and make it part of medicare in this country.

### Oral Questions

Tomorrow I am meeting with the minister of health from Manitoba to discuss that very project. Last week, all the deputy ministers of health in the country met to discuss that very project.

The leader of the New Democratic Party should learn what is going on in the country in relation to health care. There are changes afoot. The federal government is showing leadership and governments are working together to make those problems better.

\* \* \*

• (1435)

### DRUG APPROVAL

**Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, PC):** Mr. Speaker, the drug approval regulatory process is in total disarray. On one side of the issue, we have a minister who, on his own signature, can override the best scientific analysis his department can provide to approve a drug knowing full well he always has to err on the side of caution.

On the other side of the issue, we have cancer fighting drugs, life saving drugs that have been bogged down in the regulatory process going on two years. Some of these drugs were approved two years ago in other jurisdictions and in other countries.

How can the minister continue to operate under this conflicting set of guidelines within his own department?

**Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservative Party cannot have it both ways: on the one hand, criticizing Health Canada because drug approvals take too long, and on the other, criticizing Health Canada because we innovate to get drug approvals through more quickly.

I can tell the hon. member that the bottom line for us is public safety and getting drugs to the patient as quickly as we can, consistent with public safety.

**Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, PC):** Mr. Speaker, what we are looking for is leadership on the issue. I have mentioned the need to be compassionate in that process, but we are looking at 40 countries in the world where this particular drug, Rituxan, that I am mentioning by name, has been approved. We are bogged down in a regulatory process that is denying patients that drug.

We are looking for international leadership to allow us to exchange information with other jurisdictions. Does the minister have a plan to share international information to avoid the cost of duplication in bringing these drugs to market?

**Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Yes, Mr. Speaker, and we are working with other governments for that purpose.

Let me tell the hon. member that we will approve these new pharmaceutical products as quickly as we can in keeping with the criteria of safety and efficacy. We will do that in every case.

*Oral Questions*

In relation to the very drug that the member mentioned, he knows that we are working on that now. We are doing everything we can to bring that to market as soon as possible, consistent with public safety.

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**FOREIGN INVESTMENT**

**Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians who have access to high priced lawyers and accountants are able to exceed the 20% foreign property limit in their RRSPs and pensions. For example, according to an access to information request, a company I have never heard of called Canada Steamship Lines has 40% of its assets currently invested in foreign companies through their \$300 million pension fund.

Can the Prime Minister explain why some people are able to circumvent these foreign ownership rules while the rest of the country has to abide by that 20% limit?

**Hon. Jim Peterson (Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, all of us in the House know that the 20% foreign property limit is something that has been under review. We were looking forward to receiving the reports from the various committees and have received them. We have also received some other reports. The whole issue of the foreign limit is a matter which is under review by the government at this time.

**Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I think the minister misunderstood because some companies, like the company called Canada Steamship Lines, already has 40% of its pension fund invested in foreign properties. This is a two tier pension system. While those with means can invest where they want to, the rest of us have to abide by that 20% rule.

Is this not just another Liberal example of “do as I say and not as I do?”

**Hon. Jim Peterson (Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we all understand the situation very well. We have been listening to committees as to exactly what they have been doing. We understand that there are certain ways that cloned funds and derivatives have been used in various ways. This is a reality of the marketplace. There is nothing new here at all. This is a matter which the government has under active review.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**BILL C-20**

**Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, although claiming to provide clarification, this bill has nothing to say about the percentage required, and what is more it is dictating the question to the national assembly.

Will the minister agree that the only thing that comes across in his bill is that he is seeking, unequivocally, to prevent the Quebec people from deciding its own future, which is unacceptable?

• (1440)

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (President of the Queen’s Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, far more progress will be made when the Bloc Québécois stops imputing motives, particularly since it seems that we are more and more in agreement on the substance.

According to a statement made by the member for Beauharnois—Salaberry, the intergovernmental affairs critic, clarity on the majority and on the question would be a part of discussions after the referendum vote. He says the borders would be negotiable. If that is the case, our positions are moving closer together, rising above the vehemence of the Bloc Québécois.

**Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Quebec referendum legislation does not set out any percentage because all parties in the national assembly support the rule of 50% plus one.

The federal government is challenging this percentage. Does the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, that staunch defender of clarity, feel that clarity is having people vote without letting them know in advance what he considers an acceptable level to engage in negotiations?

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (President of the Queen’s Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is obvious that negotiating the breakup of a country, with its population cut in two, is totally irresponsible, but the hon. member does not need to take my word for it. Here is a quote “If, say, a referendum were won by 52%, would there be sufficient political cohesion in Quebec? That is the big question for me”.

This was asked on June 15, 1994, by Lucien Bouchard.

\* \* \*

[English]

**FOREIGN INVESTMENT**

**Mr. Eric Lowther (Calgary Centre, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, Canadian families not only have to worry about this government’s onerous tax burden and feeding and clothing their families, they also have to try to scrape together RRSP contributions for their retirement.

However, the finance minister’s rules limit the amount that families can invest in foreign owned companies to 20%. On the other hand, interestingly the finance minister’s own company skirted the spirit of those rules by investing 40% of its pension fund in foreign owned companies.

My question is for the Prime Minister. Why do the rules that are imposed on every Canadian family not apply to the finance minister’s own company?

*Oral Questions*

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as everybody knows, all the assets of the Minister of Finance were put in trust the day he became the Minister of Finance. He is doing his job. Trying to throw mud at the Minister of Finance, who has always acted in a very proper fashion, is absolutely unacceptable.

**Mr. Eric Lowther (Calgary Centre, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, we are talking about the finance minister's company here. What is very clear is that when it came to his company's pension plan, the finance minister's company ignored the spirit of his own regulations. He did not want to be limited to the normal—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh.

**The Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. member for Calgary Centre.

**Mr. Eric Lowther:**—20% ceiling that he imposes on all other Canadian RRSPs. He made 18% in one year but he denied other Canadians the same opportunity.

Why does the Prime Minister impose rules on Canadian families that he does not impose on the finance minister's company?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is just trying to attack the Minister of Finance indirectly.

The Minister of Finance put all his assets in trust. Everything is managed at arm's length. He does not oversee any of the decisions. I am sure the hon. member does not want to drag the Minister of Finance into that situation. The minister has respected all the rules provided for under the conflict of interest code.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**BILL C-20**

**Mrs. Monique Guay (Laurentides, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in 1991, the supreme court ruled as follows:

There is a further, equally important aspect of the right, namely that each vote must be relatively equal to every other vote. To water down the importance and significance of an individual's vote is to weaken the democratic process.

My question is for the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs. Since supreme court decisions seem to be very important for the government, how can the minister defend a bill that promotes the inequality of votes, in flagrant contradiction of a supreme court ruling?

• (1445)

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my response is that there is no contradiction at all. The reason the supreme court talks about a clear majority is

obviously because the clarity of the majority must be assessed, and for that it is necessary to know the circumstances in which a referendum is held. There is therefore no pre-set threshold either, any more than there is such a threshold in Quebec's *Loi des consultations populaires*.

If the member is determined that one vote should have the same value as another, she should tell us that it is three out of five, and that it will take three victories in a row to wipe out our two—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh.

**The Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. member for Laurentides.

**Mrs. Monique Guay (Laurentides, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in another supreme court decision, we find the following "A system which dilutes one citizen's vote unduly as compared with another citizen's vote runs the risk of providing inadequate representation to the citizen whose vote is diluted. The result will be uneven and unfair representation".

Does the minister want to reverse his position and defend with democrats the rule that all votes are equal?

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, if I am not mistaken, there was a referendum with a 90% win in Mont-Tremblant, in the member's riding. I suppose she will be writing to Quebec's minister of municipal affairs, Louise Harel, to insist that she respect that decision.

A referendum is not a decision, not in Quebec law and not in Canadian federal law. A referendum is a consultation and its results must be evaluated using different criteria, including the clarity of the question and the clarity of the result.

\* \* \*

[English]

**CORRECTIONAL SERVICES CANADA**

**Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, according to a correctional services task force report on security: "The service's goal is to move toward a concept of security that is elegant and discreet".

Has the solicitor general contracted Tommy Hilfiger to design these new facilities?

**Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague has the report that was done by Correctional Services Canada. There is absolutely nothing to indicate that any of this report would ever be put in place by Correctional Services Canada.

**Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, all other reports have made it. The mandate for this task force suggests

*Oral Questions*

“the members of the task force reflect on the people side of corrections, remembering the stories of offenders”.

This entire report was written with the offender as the victim. This report is an embarrassment to all victims in Canada. My question is for the solicitor general.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh.

**The Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. member was coming to his question.

**Mr. Myron Thompson:** Mr. Speaker, they should be ashamed of themselves, laughing at victims.

When will we see a task force made up of victims, made up of guards, made up of frontline workers instead of these bleeding heart bookworms from their ivory towers?

**Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this is nothing but a report at this stage. It has not even been discussed by the senior executives at Correctional Services Canada. I wish my hon. colleague would not jump to conclusions.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**BILL C-20**

**Mr. Pierre de Savoye (Portneuf, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in the bill introduced by the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, the numerous requirements regarding the number of players to be consulted are not fooling anyone. Behind the alleged search for clarity, the minister is in fact making a shameless attempt at political blackmail.

Will the minister admit that this bill, with its slew of unreasonable requirements, is nothing but a tool that the federal government is giving itself to make sure there will always be someone to suggest that it should not negotiate?

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we are required to do so by the supreme court opinion that the Bloc Québécois and the PQ government praised for over a year.

● (1450)

This opinion states that in the event of secession, the partners in the federation ought to assess the situation and negotiate in good faith and in compliance with the principles set out by the court, namely democracy, the rule of law, constitutionalism and respect for minorities. Everyone would be bound by these principles, including the government that is seeking to secede.

\* \* \*

[English]

**STEEL INDUSTRY**

**Mr. Carmen Provenzano (Sault Ste. Marie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Revenue.

In October the minister launched an investigation into the illegal dumping of foreign hot rolled carbon steel plate into the Canadian market. This investigation was in response to a complaint filed by Algoma Steel, a company employing 4,000 steelworkers in my riding of Sault Ste. Marie.

What action has he taken to ensure this complaint is being processed without unnecessary delay?

**Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of National Revenue and Secretary of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for this very important question.

I wish to confirm as the Minister of National Revenue that we have decided to proceed with a major investigation based on a complaint filed by Algoma Steel Corporation. We are looking at whether or not there is dumping. A decision will be taken at the beginning of next year. If there is dumping, we will have to proceed with temporary duties.

\* \* \*

**CORRECTIONAL SERVICES CANADA**

**Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, do you feel lucky? If you have been convicted and sentenced to the new Club Fed, you are darn right you do. The task force on security has recommended that “the majority of institutions be classified as multilevel—consisting of maximum, medium and minimum security inmates”. It is kind of like a con condo by Correctional Services Canada.

Does the solicitor general agree with the task force, yes or no?

**Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I indicated yesterday I have not seen the report. The senior executives from Correctional Services Canada have not seen the report. There is absolutely nothing to indicate that anything in the report would be put in place.

**Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, it is gratifying to know there is at least one person in Canada who has not seen this report, the solicitor general. This report goes on to state: “The over-utilization of bulletproof glass may give the illusion of openness, but at the same time reduces human contact and hinders effective intervention”.

I wonder what the solicitor general would like to say to the victims of crime who are looking at these perpetrators and wondering why there is even consideration of no armed guards, no razor wire fences, institutions complete with golf courses and riding stables—

**The Speaker:** The hon. solicitor general.

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that my hon. colleague is indicating that this is government policy. It is not. I can assure my hon. colleague that I will not support any measures that would jeopardize security in our federal institutions—

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

\* \* \*

**AGRICULTURE**

**Mr. Dick Proctor (Palliser, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, last month in his AIDA confessionals the agriculture minister said that it was costly, complicated and cumbersome. He also said that he had taken a tough approach to ensure that all 1998 AIDA cheques would be delivered before Christmas. With nine shopping days left, information from his own department proves that there is more than \$1 billion in the system and tens of thousands of farm families desperate to receive a portion of this money.

What is the minister's plan B to ensure the money will be in the farmers' hands before Christmas?

**Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows that the AIDA money announced by the government a year ago was for over two years. A portion of that money was allocated and it was assumed it would be sent out to the farmers after their applications were reviewed as a result of their 1998 business. By far of the majority, there will be very few of those. When the information is all in from the producers, there will be very few applications that trigger a payment as a result of 1998 that will not be in the hands of the producers.

• (1455)

**Mr. Dick Proctor (Palliser, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the minister has been widely quoted recently as saying he was practising tough love for farmers. I think he should keep a dose of the same medicine for his own department.

The fact of the matter is that there was a \$420 million output on AIDA as of December 9. That means there is more than \$500 million in the system for 1998.

When will that money get out to the farmers? The Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food promised it before Christmas at the Sask Wheat Pool convention on November 18.

**Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member should get his numbers right. The calculation that was used by the industry, by all the provincial input and with the safety nets advisory committee was \$600 million for the 1998 farm business year, the remainder for the 1999 business year.

I can assure the hon. member that all of that money will be in the hands of the producers at the end of those two years.

\* \* \*

**HALIFAX INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT**

**Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, PC):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport.

Under the access to information program, we received a letter written by the minister to the Halifax International Airport Authority dated July 22, 1998. It outlined the terms of the agreement to take over the airport. One of the sentences the minister used in his own letter is: "This offer confirms Transport Canada's intent to assume liabilities for the current pyritic slate mitigation program".

That is a very clear commitment by the minister. It is very simple. The department has now reneged on that commitment. Will the minister please confirm to us he will instruct his department to honour the commitment and assume the responsibility for existing pollution at Halifax airport?

**Hon. David M. Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, since that letter was written, there has been an agreement concluded with the Halifax International Airport Authority and it was to its satisfaction. If there is some problem with that agreement, then obviously I will look into it.

**Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, PC):** Mr. Speaker, it is not only the minister's letter. There is a signed letter, a signed agreement, signed by the director of airports divestiture that says: "Transport Canada agrees to continue to be responsible for pyritic slate runoff existing prior to transfer date". It is very clear and very simple.

Surely if the Government of Canada signs an agreement and a person signs an agreement with the government, the government should honour that commitment. Will the minister instruct his department to honour the commitment?

**Hon. David M. Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this government honours all of its commitments. In the meantime there has been a signed agreement between the authority and the government. I assume that covers the question the hon. member has outlined.

\* \* \*

**ARTS AND CULTURE**

**Mr. Gurbax Singh Malhi (Bramalea—Gore—Malton—Springdale, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, recently the federal government announced additional funds to prepare young Canadians for careers in the arts, film and video. Can the Minister of Canadian Heritage

*Point of Order*

explain to the House why it is necessary to support professional training institutions in arts and culture across Canada?

[Translation]

**Mr. Mauril Bélanger (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Department of Canadian Heritage is pleased to join the Department of Human Resources Development in announcing a \$65 million initiative over the next five years. This initiative reflects the commitment made to young Canadians by the federal government.

With 19 national institutions and schools of theatre, dance and cinema across the country, we are training people to continue Canada's excellent work in the cultural sector.

\* \* \*

[English]

**HEALTH**

**Mr. Reed Elley (Nanaimo—Cowichan, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, today the first steps toward a class action suit by 300 Canadians against Health Canada will be initiated over the failing of a jaw implant that is causing facial bones to actually rot.

Years ago U.S. authorities prohibited the sale of this product and in Canada the Dental Surgeons of Ontario echoed the same concern. That should have been enough for Health Canada to spring into action, but it did nothing.

Why will the health minister allow this to happen? Will he not admit his failure and take some responsibility for these victims?

**Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I understand that very subject is before the courts in litigation. Everybody will have ample opportunity to find out what the true facts are and then a court will judge.

The hon. member might do well to wait until the facts come out before jumping to the conclusions that he expressed so emphatically this afternoon.

\* \* \*

• (1500)

[Translation]

**FRANCOPHONES OUTSIDE QUEBEC**

**Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in his Bill C-20, the Prime Minister says he is concerned about respect for the rights of the anglophone minority in Quebec.

Quebec has repeatedly reaffirmed its commitment in this regard. But the Prime Minister has never made similar commitments with respect to the francophone minority in Canada.

Will he tell us today what he intends to do to ensure respect for the rights of francophones outside Quebec?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have worked on this problem throughout my political career. I did so with the charter of rights and freedoms in 1982. Throughout my career I have done so and I will continue to do so.

I have said this publicly and I will I repeat it. I welcome this opportunity to say that this government feels it is very important for the nation's capital to be bilingual.

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères—Les-Patriotes, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Following the tabling by—

**The Speaker:** Is this something to do with what went on during Oral Question Period?

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères—Les-Patriotes, BQ):** Yes, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member has the floor.

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**POINTS OF ORDER**

## TABLING OF DOCUMENTS

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères—Les-Patriotes, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, all the Bloc Québécois questions have had to do with this very important issue, which involves the future of the people of Quebec.

I therefore seek the unanimous consent of the House to table a document which will certainly enlighten it as the holiday season approaches.

**The Speaker:** Order, please. I again ask the hon. whip whether this is something directly related to what went on during Oral Question Period.

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** The answer is yes, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. whip for the Bloc Québécois.

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Mr. Speaker, following the government's tabling of a bill denying the fundamental rights of Quebecers, I seek the unanimous consent of the House to table a document that will certainly enlighten it.

It is a brief tabled by—

**The Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent for the hon. member to table this document?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Speaker:** Perhaps we could proceed in this fashion. I will start with the second row and with the hon. member for Joliette.

• (1505)

**Mr. René Laurin (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, a book entitled "Le pari de la franchise" was recently published. I think that,

*Point of Order*

following the announcement by the federal government of the tabling of a bill denying the fundamental rights of Quebecers, it might be useful to members of the House to take a look at a part of this book.

Consequently, I ask for the unanimous consent of the House to table this document.

**The Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent of the House?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**Mr. Benoît Serré (Timiskaming—Cochrane, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

I would like to tell the thousands of Quebecers and French Canadians across the country who are listening to us that, like all the Bloc members, I have a document in my possession. It is a report from the Standing Joint Committee on Official Languages asking that the city of Ottawa—

**The Speaker:** This is a point of debate, not a point of order.

**Mr. Benoît Serré:** Mr. Speaker, to be fair, if members of the Bloc Quebecois have the right to ask for the unanimous consent of the House to table a paper, I believe that—

**The Speaker:** In that case, the hon. member has the floor.

**Mr. Benoît Serré:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to table a document and seek unanimous consent that the House ask the Ontario legislature to make our national capital, Ottawa, a bilingual city where both French and English are recognized.

**The Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent of the House?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Repentigny, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I have here the speech the Prime Minister of Canada delivered in Hull on November 28, 1999, where he says that the referendum questions, both in 1980 and in 1995, were clear.

To clarify matters for the House, following the Prime Minister's announcement concerning the tabling of a bill denying the fundamental rights of Quebec, I ask for the unanimous consent of the House to table this speech.

• (1510)

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent of the House?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Mr. Speaker, I noticed earlier that, in all his wisdom, the Speaker of the House has allowed our colleague across the way to complete his presentation before asking for unanimous consent to table the document.

May I ask that you extend the same consideration to the members of our party, allowing us to finish our presentations so that our colleagues know exactly what we want?

**Mr. Michel Bellehumeur:** We want fairness.

**The Deputy Speaker:** There was fairness. Some hon. members have already completed their presentations. The problem is that they are somewhat repetitious—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh.

**The Deputy Speaker:** But yes, after numerous requests for unanimous consent, the Chair may speed things up a little.

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Mr. Speaker, I have no doubts about your great mental capacity, nor do I have any doubts about your capacity for precognition. This being said, I do not think that you can assume what my colleagues will say when they stand.

You must give them the opportunity to offer their point of view so that all members of this House know what it is all about before deciding whether to give their consent or not.

**The Deputy Speaker:** When I interrupted the hon. member for Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, he had already indicated that he wanted to table a document and was asking for the unanimous consent of the House to do so. The House refused consent.

**Mr. Gérard Asselin (Charlevoix, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, further to the introduction by the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs of a bill denying Quebecers their fundamental rights, I ask for the unanimous consent of the House to table a document that will enlighten this House.

This is an article that was published on December 11, 1999 in *La Presse* which describes how upset Quebec, and especially its national capital, are as a result of the announcement—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I have here a document which could be useful to members of the House following the tabling by the federal government of a bill denying the fundamental rights of Quebecers.

*Point of Order*

It is an article published in *La Presse* on December 16, 1994, where it was reported that Ottawa's insistence on the word "separation" being used in the referendum question had no legal basis.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent of the House?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**Mrs. Maud Debien (Laval East, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to table an article published in the *Ottawa Citizen* on October 20, where the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs warned Quebecers and the Quebec government that he would act unilaterally and attempt to hurt Quebecers.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent of the House?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I have here a press release from the Mouvement national des Québécois stating its position and its total opposition to the bill introduced by the Prime minister and the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and seeking to restrict the fundamental rights of Quebecers.

To enlighten the House, I ask for unanimous consent to table this document.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent of the House?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**Mr. Michel Bellehumeur (Berthier—Montcalm, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, a document prepared by the chief electoral officer of Quebec at the time of the last referendum shows beyond any doubt that referendums in Quebec are held very democratically and that we do not have any lesson to receive from the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs.

For his benefit, I ask for the unanimous consent to table the document, so that he can read it.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

• (1515)

**Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, further to the introduction by the government of the bill denying Quebecers their fundamental rights, I ask for the unanimous consent of the House to table a document that will enlighten the House.

It is an article published in *Le Droit* on December 11, 1999, showing very clearly how the government intends to prevent Quebecers from freely choosing their future.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Mr. Speaker, we have had cause since yesterday to doubt your capacity to hear, but this time I must regrettably point out to you that we heard no one in the House answer no to the request for unanimous consent we just made.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The parliamentary secretary indicated his opposition very clearly to the Chair.

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Mr. Speaker, I see that your hearing has improved considerably since yesterday.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I also have eyes and I can see when somebody shakes his head to say no.

**Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, further to the introduction of a bill denying the fundamental rights of Quebecers, I have here parts of a report on the territorial integrity of the province of Quebec in the event that it achieves sovereignty, presented to the committee to examine matters relating to the accession of Québec to sovereignty in May of 1992, at the Quebec national assembly, which states that a sovereign Quebec would undergo no changes in its present boundaries.

I ask for the unanimous consent of the House to table this document that should enlighten this House.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**Mr. Eugène Bellemare (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for International Cooperation, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I ask for the unanimous consent of the House to table the second report of the Standing Joint Committee on Official Languages.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent of the House?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I have here a study by the Library of Parliament on the fundamental rights of Canadians and Quebecers. The study was prepared in 1988 and is entitled "A Comparison of the Bill of Rights and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms".

I ask for the unanimous consent of the House to table this document that should enlighten—



*Point of Order*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**Mr. Yvan Bernier (Bonaventure—Gaspé—Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Pabok, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, further to the introduction by the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, of a bill denying the fundamental rights of Quebecers I have here an article from *Le Droit* published on December 8, 1995, that establishes that the 50% plus one rule is acceptable everywhere in Canada, except for Quebec.

Let me quote the article “People in Ontario—”

**The Deputy Speaker:** I will not tolerate this and the member knows it very well. I will guess what he wants to ask. Is there unanimous consent for the tabling of the document?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**Mr. Daniel Turp (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I have here a document that could be useful to members of the House further to the introduction of a bill denying the fundamental rights and prerogatives of the Quebec people and of the Quebec nation. Is it the Quebec National Assembly Act.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I have here a study on the social union made by Ghislain Autis for the Quebec Intergovernmental Affairs Secretariat.

I would ask for unanimous consent to table this document.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

• (1520)

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to let you know that the members of the Bloc Québécois support the tabling of the report of the joint committee on official languages. I cannot say where the no came from, but I only wanted to make it clear that we agree to have this report tabled in the House.

**Mr. Mauril Bélanger (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, since I am a member of the joint committee, I ask for unanimous consent to table the second report of the Standing Joint Committee on Official Languages.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**Mr. Richard Marceau (Charlesbourg, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, to your great surprise and total amazement I am sure, I have here an article published in the December 11, 1999 issue of *La Presse*—

**The Deputy Speaker:** The Bloc Québécois House leader.

**Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that, as agreed, the Bloc Québécois supports the tabling of the document the hon. member wants to table. I do not understand why it is not happening now.

**An hon. member:** Reform said no.

**Mr. Michel Gauthier:** If I understood right, Reform said no.

[English]

**The Deputy Speaker:** It is not for the Chair to say where the noes came from. The Chair heard noes and so unanimous consent was refused. I expect that there will be an opportunity some time for presentation of reports from committees. When that happens maybe the committee report will be presented, but we are not going to get into a fight about that now.

[Translation]

**Mr. Richard Marceau:** Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, I have here an article published in the December 11, 1999 issue of *La Presse* stating that a simple majority of 50% plus one is sufficient anywhere in Canada except when it comes to Quebec. I ask for unanimous consent to table this document.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

[English]

**Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I have a committee report to table and I would ask for unanimous consent to go to the presentation of reports from committees.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent to proceed to the presentation of reports from committees?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

[Translation]

**Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I ask for the unanimous consent of the House to table a document that will enlighten the House.

It is a brief that the chairman of the Montreal—Ville-Marie district of the Parti Québécois submitted to the Bélanger-Campeau

*Point of Order*

Commission. Here is an excerpt “Is it not time for Quebec to finally act as a responsible society and make its own decisions?” I ask for the unanimous consent of the House to table this document.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**Mr. André Harvey (Chicoutimi, PC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I ask for the unanimous consent of the House to table a document which will be inspiring for the government. There are parts of this document that deserve to be read very carefully. I ask for the unanimous consent to table the red book of the Liberal Party, in particular, those parts regarding cultural identity and cultural development.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**Mr. Pierre de Savoye (Portneuf, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I have here an article from the *Toronto Star* dated December 11, 1999. This article clearly explains why the purpose of the bill introduced by the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs is to imprison Quebec in Canada. I ask for the unanimous consent to table this document.

**Deputy Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

[English]

**Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of members from all parties on both sides of the House who are waiting to present petitions. We only have today and potentially tomorrow and the next day to do so before the House adjourns until February.

There are constituents who want petitions presented in the House and I would seek unanimous consent to do so.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent to proceed with petitions?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

• (1525)

[Translation]

**Mr. Yves Rocheleau (Trois-Rivières, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, further to the introduction of this bill whose purpose is to deny the Quebec people their fundamental rights, I ask for the unanimous consent of the House to table a document that will enlighten the House.

It is an ad by the Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste de Montréal recently published in major dailies in Quebec and entitled “Shame on Ottawa”.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I have here a wonderful text that pays tribute to one of the greatest advocates of Quebec’s interests and democracy, René Lévesque.

The Prime Minister introduced a bill denying Quebecers their basic rights, and he should read it.

Therefore, I ask for the unanimous consent of the House to table this document for the enlightenment of all members.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the hon. member have unanimous consent to table this document?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**Mr. Maurice Godin (Châteauguay, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I have here a document that could be useful to the members of the House, further to the introduction by the federal government of a bill denying Quebecers their fundamental rights. It is an excerpt from a book recently published and entitled *Le pari de la franchise*.

I seek the unanimous consent of the House to table this document.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**Mrs. Madeleine Dalphond-Guiral (Laval Centre, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I had the privilege to read an article published in the December 11, 1999 issue of the daily newspaper *Le Devoir*, in which Henri Brun proposes an immediate appeal to the international community, further to the introduction of the bill last week.

Considering the importance of the stakes and the fact the article is rather short, and therefore will not require a lot of effort from our colleagues, I beg for the unanimous consent of the House to table this article.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**Mr. Paul Mercier (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, further to the introduction by the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs of a bill denying Quebecers their fundamental rights, I draw the attention of my colleagues to an article from the October 2, 1995 issue of *Le Droit*, which says that the 50% plus one rule applies everywhere in Canada except in Quebec.

*Point of Order*

It seems to me that this article would enlighten my colleagues on the issue—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. The member is taking too much time to describe the article. Does he have the unanimous consent of the House to table the article?

**Mr. Paul Mercier:** I had not finished, Mr. Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** If it is a point of order I will hear it.

**Mr. Paul Mercier:** I did not even have the chance to ask for unanimous consent so why is this being denied?

I know my colleagues opposite are eager to learn so I ask for their unanimous consent.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**Mr. Odina Desrochers (Lotbinière, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, since last Friday, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs has been making confusing and sometimes provocative remarks.

This follows the announcement made by the Prime Minister, who just introduced a bill denying Quebecers their fundamental rights.

I would like to table a document from a real party, which has always defended Quebec's interests and of which I am very proud, namely the Parti Québécois. This document is entitled *Travailler pour la souveraineté, pourquoi*—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. I do not want a description of the article. The member can give the title and maybe ask a question, but this is a point of order not a speech.

**Mr. Odina Desrochers:** I therefore ask for unanimous consent to table this document that will enlighten the House of Commons.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**Mr. Stéphan Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in view of the fact that my colleague from Chicoutimi was not allowed to table the document, I have here the Liberal red book.

On page 9, it says "Generations—have dreamed of building—an independent country". I agree with that and I ask for unanimous consent to table the Liberal red book.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

• (1530)

**Mr. Gilles-A. Perron (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, on December 11, 1999, I have here an article in the *Journal de Montréal* that confirms that Ottawa wants to muzzle Quebec.

Further to the introduction of the bill, I want to table this article. I ask for unanimous consent to do so.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**Mr. Ghislain Lebel (Chambly, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, further to the announcement by the Prime Minister and the introduction of a bill denying the fundamental rights of Quebecers, I ask for the unanimous consent of the House to table a document that could certainly enlighten the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs.

It is an article published in *Le Soleil* of December 11, 1999, which says that ordinary majority, which is 50% plus one—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**Mr. Jean-Paul Marchand (Québec East, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, since the Prime Minister has introduced a bill denying Quebecers their fundamental rights, I ask for the unanimous consent of the House to table a very informative document.

It is an article published in *Le Soleil* on December 11, 1999, announcing the bill introduced last Monday. Its title—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**Mr. Maurice Dumas (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, further to the Prime Minister's announcement and to the introduction of a bill denying Quebecers their fundamental rights, I ask for the unanimous consent of the House to table a very informative document.

It is an excerpt from the report on the territorial integrity of Quebec if it becomes a sovereign country. This report was submitted to the Commission d'étude des questions afférentes à la souveraineté of the Quebec national assembly in May 1992.

Through the hon. member for Brome—Missisquoi, I ask for the unanimous consent of the House.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

*Point of Order*

**Mr. Ghislain Fournier (Manicouagan, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, since the Liberal government has introduced a bill denying Quebecers their fundamental rights, I ask for the unanimous consent of the House to table a very informative document.

It is a brief which Les Patriotes du pays submitted to the Bélanger-Campeau Commission. This report says, and I quote—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**Mrs. Pierrette Venne (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, further to the introduction by the Prime Minister of the bill denying Quebec's fundamental rights, I ask for the unanimous consent of the House to table a document that will enlighten the House. This is a brief submitted by the city of Val-d'Or to the Bélanger-Campeau commission.

This report states, on the first line—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there other points of order. You two?

**Mr. Michel Bellehumeur:** Yes, Mr. Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for Berthier—Montcalm and the hon. member for Québec East have already intervened. Is this something else?

**Mr. Michel Bellehumeur:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. As you heard earlier, our House leader, the hon. member for Roberval, has laryngitis. He has asked me to ask for unanimous consent to table an excerpt from the referendum act of Colorado—

**The Deputy Speaker:** No. This is an abuse of the process. We already decided yesterday and the day before that each of the members who want to table a document will have the right to do so. If there is another member who has not intervened yet I can recognize him. The hon. member for Roberval has already done this, has he not?

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for Roberval.

**Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I did many things today but I did not table any document. I will do so now.

My thanks to my colleague who offered to do it for me because I am having a small problem but I am still able to talk to you.

• (1535)

Following the announcement by the Prime Minister of the tabling of a bill negating the fundamental rights of Quebec, I seek the unanimous consent of the House to table a copy of an editorial that hon. members should read written by Alain Dubuc, a federalist who is against this bill.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonnette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to get unanimous consent for a motion congratulating the members from the Bloc Québécois, who so generously represented the interests of Quebec.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I cannot allow that.

**Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I have here a document that the members of this House will find extremely interesting. It is an explosive document, which shows how the government's bill on the clarity of the question is making relations between Quebec and Canada take a turn for the worst.

The Minister for Intergovernmental Affairs starts by saying that he is not promising any major constitutional reform and then says that—

**The Deputy Speaker:** The explanation is a bit long. Does the hon. member have—

**Mrs. Francine Lalonde:** Mr. Speaker, this is an explosive document.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent of the House?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I have here a document that I wish to table with the unanimous consent of the House.

It includes an excerpt of a book entitled *Le pari de la franchise*, something we have not got from the people across the way for some time now. I would ask for the unanimous consent of the House to table this document.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent for the hon. member to table the document?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**Mr. Louis Plamondon:** Mr. Speaker, I have a point of order.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Has the hon. member not asked to table something already?

All hon. members should get the opportunity to ask to table a document.

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Mr. Speaker, I do not want to come back to a point of order I made earlier, but you cannot foresee what my hon. colleague from Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour will say on his point of order.

You must take the time to listen to him. The standing orders stipulate that when an hon. member rises you have to recognize him or her.

**The Deputy Speaker:** That is not the case. The standing orders give the chair some discretion. I indicated that everyone should have the opportunity to ask for the unanimous consent of the House to table a document. We have done this. We have heard several points of order from a number of hon. members, including the whip of the Bloc Québécois.

We now have to try to proceed to other business and maybe further down the road we will hear other points of order.

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[Translation]

### DEFENCE EXPORTS

**Mr. Denis Paradis (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I am pleased to table on behalf of the government, in both official languages, the 1998 annual report on Canada's defence exports.

This annual report provides greater transparency on the export of these goods from Canada.

**Mrs. Christiane Gagnon:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I wish to table a reflection on poverty which offers a clear explanation of the disastrous effect of the policies—

**The Deputy Speaker:** This is an abuse. I have already indicated that we will have one document tabled by each member. That we have already done, and we must get on with the business of the House.

**Mr. Paul Crête:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is this another document or not?

**Mr. Paul Crête:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Québec wishes to table a document. You will not let her do so because you say it is part of the other series of documents. However, the document entitled *Regard sur la pauvreté* is not—

• (1540)

**The Deputy Speaker:** The Chair has brought down a ruling on this point and the decision is that each member will have the

### Routine Proceedings

opportunity to ask to table one document. It makes no difference to me that the point of order is on a different subject, as the subject is not important. It is the tabling of documents that is involved and we have finished that now.

**Mr. Réal Ménard:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, I wish to thank you for your patience, but I would like a directive.

I believe it is very important that you indicate to us from the chair, in a clear and unambiguous manner, the extent of your attachment to freedom of expression and explain to us why the hon. member for Brome—Missisquoi has been refused the tabling of documents. Do you find this acceptable in proper democratic debate?

**The Deputy Speaker:** This is not a point of order. The hon. member for Hochelaga—Maisonneuve is really debating with the Chair.

[English]

All hon. members have had a chance to present a document today. We are not on debate. We are on points of order.

[Translation]

When are moving slowly on to the debate and the hon. member for Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, like all the other members, will have plenty of opportunity to speak.

\* \* \*

### GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

**Mr. Derek Lee (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 four petitions.

\* \* \*

### INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

**Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34, I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canada-Japan Interparliamentary Group and the related financial report.

The delegation took part in the 10th bilateral meeting between the Canada-Japan Interparliamentary Group and the Japan-Canada Parliamentary Friendship League, held from November 6 to November 13, 1999.

The delegation also traveled to the region of Hiroshima and to Shikoku Island, where it met governors of prefectures and senior officials. It visited the peace memorial park and Hiroshima's atomic bomb museum, and it met with senior officials of Mazda Motor Corporation. In all these instances, the delegation defended Canadian interests.

*Routine Proceedings*

The delegation's tour was exceptional. Indeed, in addition to bilateral consultations, the delegation had the great honour of being welcomed by His Excellency Keiso Obuchi, the Prime Minister of Japan, by Their Excellencies Soichiro Ito, President of the House of Representatives, and—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member but this is not an opportunity to read the report. It is simply the tabling of the report and I hope the hon. member will get to that.

**Mr. Bernard Patry:** Mr. Speaker, I am therefore pleased to table the report and I thank you for your patience.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

**INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS**

**Mr. Derek Lee (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the third report of the Canada-China Legislative Association regarding the second bilateral meeting which took place in Canada from October 25 to October 31, 1999.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**

## OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

**Mr. Benoît Serré (Timiskaming—Cochrane, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Joint Committee on Official Languages asking the Ontario legislature to declare Ottawa, the national capital, a bilingual city with two official languages,

[*English*]

## FISHERIES AND OCEANS

**Mr. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans which recommends that it be granted permission to travel from February 13 to 23, 2000 to review the Oceans Act, the aboriginal fishing strategy and the aquaculture issues.

## HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT AND THE STATUS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

**Mr. John Godfrey (Don Valley West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, an interim report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities emanating from

the sub-committee on children and youth at risk with proposals for the year 2000 budget concerning a children and families budget.

• (1545)

[*Translation*]

## PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

**Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the third report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts relating to audit observations contained in the April 1999 report of the Auditor General of Canada entitled "National Defence and Health Canada: Non-compliance with conditions and inadequate monitoring with respect to the pre-licensing use of an anti-malarial drug".

Pursuant to Standing Order 109 of the House of Commons, the committee requests the government to table a comprehensive response to this report.

## HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT AND STATUS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

**Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, further to the tabling of the report on children and youth at risk by the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, I want to point out that the Bloc Québécois tabled a dissenting report because the main report does not take into account the situation the provinces are facing due to the cuts to the Canada social transfer.

I believe one of the first things the committee should have done was to make a commitment and to really support the provinces, to respect their priorities, taking into account their disastrous financial situation after six years of social deficit.

[*English*]

**Mr. Peter Adams:** Mr. Speaker, I just want to be sure. Have we presented the first report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development?

**The Deputy Speaker:** I believe a report was presented from the human resources development committee. The hon. member for Peterborough might consult the Table.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Benoît Serré:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. When I presented the report of the official languages committee I should have said "Ottawa, the capital of Canada" instead of "the national capital".

\* \* \*

[*English*]

**PROCEEDS OF CRIME (MONEY LAUNDERING) ACT**

**Hon. Jim Peterson (for the Minister of Finance)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-22, an act to facilitate combating the laundering of proceeds of crime, to establish the Financial

Transactions and Reports Analysis Centre of Canada and to amend and repeal certain acts in consequence.

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

\* \* \*

#### NUCLEAR AMENDMENT ACT, 1998

**Mr. David Chatters (Athabasca, Ref.)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-403, an act to amend the Nuclear Energy Act and the Nuclear Safety and Control Act.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to reintroduce my private member's bill to essentially split responsibility for Atomic Energy of Canada Limited and the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission.

It is quite clear to me, and I think to most Canadians, that having both these agencies report and be responsible to the same minister puts that minister in a clear conflict. Splitting that responsibility would serve Canadians much better.

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

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT

**Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-404, an act to amend the Employment Insurance Act and the Department of Human Resources Development Act, 1999.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present this bill which contains all the changes to the employment insurance the Bloc Québécois is proposing so that it can again become a system allowing unemployed workers to have a decent income while they are out of a job.

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

\* \* \*

• (1550)

#### EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT

**Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-405, an act to amend the Employment Insurance Act and another act in consequence, 1999 (Employment Insurance Account and annual premium rate setting).

He said: Mr. Speaker, this is a bill to give back to all of those who finance the employment insurance program, employers and employees, total control over that program to stop the federal

#### Routine Proceedings

government from diverting billions of dollars of the money people contribute to ensure that they can count on a decent employment insurance program.

**The Deputy Speaker:** When shall the bill be read the second time? At the next sitting of the House?

**Some hon. members:** At the next sitting of the House.

**Some hon. members:** Now.

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

**Mr. Paul Crête:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. When you recognized my seconder, Mr. Bernier, you forgot to name his constituency and there are two members named Bernier in the House.

I would like all the members and the whole population to know that it is the member for Bonaventure—Gaspé—Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Pabok who supports my demand for reform of the employment insurance program.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member is absolutely correct.

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Mr. Speaker, when you introduced this bill in the House, you very kindly asked when we wished it to be called for debate the next time and we respectfully requested that it be now, but you seem to have ignored our request, so—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Yes, I did hear that, but I also heard members on the other side ask that it be at the next sitting of the House. When there is much noise on one side, it may be difficult to hear what members on the other side are saying but the Chair can hear everyone.

\* \* \*

[English]

#### CRIMINAL CODE

**Mr. Paul Forseth (New Westminster—Coquitlam—Burnaby, Ref.)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-406, an act to amend the Criminal Code (proceeds of crime).

He said: Mr. Speaker, there is a lucrative business in Canada of smuggling people into our country for profit. Drug enforcement has the ability to seize cash, goods and property of smuggling rings. Yet immigration authorities are not awarded the same power. Proceeds of crime are there for smuggling drugs but not for people.

My bill, which would amend section 462 of the criminal code, would allow immigration to seize the profits of people smugglers. With any underworld activity it is difficult to catch the kingpins of smuggling operations. However it is essential that we allow the greatest amount of resources available in order to begin decreasing the financial incentives for such activity.

*Routine Proceedings*

Therefore I encourage all parliamentarians in the House to examine my bill. It is time we put an end to the large inconsistencies within the Canadian criminal code and go after proceeds of crime for all crimes.

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

\* \* \*

**CRIMINAL CODE**

**Mr. Paul Forsyth (New Westminster—Coquitlam—Burnaby, Ref.)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-407, an act to amend the Criminal Code (judicial review).

He said: Mr. Speaker, Canadians have always been frustrated that a life sentence in this country is in fact not a life sentence. For example, Clifford Olson murdered several children yet had a chance for a review at 15 years, called the faint hope clause.

My bill would simply repeal section 745 of the criminal code including any relevant sections. However, since previous attempts at repealing this section have raised some constitutional debate, no part of my bill would be retroactive. The faint hope clause has no legitimate place in Canadian law.

I encourage all members to rethink the position of this issue, following my amendment to remove any retroactivity and simply remove 745 from the criminal code.

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

\* \* \*

• (1555)

**CRIMINAL CODE**

**Mr. Paul Forsyth (New Westminster—Coquitlam—Burnaby, Ref.)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-408, an act to amend the Criminal Code (prostitution).

He said: Mr. Speaker, constituents of mine are deeply concerned with the plaguing problem of street prostitution. They remember when the law was different and we did not have the pervasive street trade.

The way the criminal code now reads, public communication to obtain sexual services carries only a penalty of a summary conviction. In most cases the offender is given a summons like a traffic ticket which might result in a small fine.

The bill would amend section 213 of the criminal code making the penalty of communicating either an indictable offence or a summary conviction. It makes the section a hybrid or elective offence, in other words flexibility in the circumstances.

The amendment would give the system a procedural option, something the police have been asking for. I urge the minister and

all members of the House to strongly consider this vital improvement for liveable communities.

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

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**

## OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

**Mr. Mauril Bélanger (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I seek the unanimous consent of the House that the second report of the Standing Joint Committee on Official Languages tabled earlier today be adopted without debate.

**The Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent of the House to adopt the second report?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

## FINANCE

**Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I move:

That the first report of the Standing Committee on Finance, which was presented on Friday, December 10, 1999, be concurred in.

I have moved that the report of the Standing Committee on Finance be concurred in for the following fundamental reasons. We travelled across Canada and heard from many witnesses regarding the use of the surpluses—which do not belong to the minister but to all taxpayers—in the coming years. We in the Bloc Québécois feel that a number of important consensuses have been completely ignored. I would like to discuss it here and I would like the report to be adopted after this speech. Let us take, for example, the social transfers. The whole issue of social transfers was debated in the finance committee and was raised by some of the witnesses. This question was fully discussed, as the Minister of Finance slashed social transfers.

The committee report does not even mention the possibility of employment insurance reform, even though it now covers only 42% of the unemployed.

They have also turned a blind eye to the recommendations made by my colleague from Québec on the fight against poverty in Canada. As for the issue of taxes, this major issue was minimized, yet the Minister of Finance has surpluses coming out of his ears.

I would like to touch upon these issues in the next few minutes if I may.



*Routine Proceedings*

As far as social transfers are concerned, since 1994 there has been a drop in federal transfers to the provinces for funding of social assistance, post-secondary education and health to the tune of \$22 billion, \$6 billion for Quebec alone.

The report by the Liberal majority in the finance committee ignores these cuts and their devastating effects on the poverty level in Canada and the situation in the health system.

I would also like to point out in passing that since 1994 Quebec has absorbed 37% of all cuts to Canadian social transfer funds for post-secondary education, health and income security while accounting for only 24% of the population of Canada.

This has had disastrous results for Quebec. It has had harmful effects on Quebec public finances as well. There is a parallel to be drawn.

• (1600)

By slashing social transfers to the provinces, the Minister of Finance has hurt Quebec. A few years back, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs made a number of statements to the effect that it was necessary to hurt Quebec economically.

That brings me back to the bill recently introduced by the same minister. This is a bill against Quebec and against Quebecers. It is a case of one Quebecer going after Quebecers. This Quebecer can now act in collusion with the Minister of Finance, another Liberal member from Quebec.

We now have a very unusual alliance that really hurts the province of Quebec, an alliance between the Minister of Finance, who fiddles with the figures, and the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, who fiddles with democracy.

These two devious individuals can now rely on 24 other Liberal members from Quebec, 24 docile Liberal members who are ready to crawl on their knees in front of English Canada in order to hurt Quebec. It is a sad thing because throughout history there have always been individuals who agreed to fight against their own people, to do the dirty work for their leaders.

There are 26 such individuals in front of the House, 26 Liberal members from Quebec who have agreed to spit on Quebec and to deny Quebecers the freedom to decide their own future. They typify docility at its worst, kow-towing to their masters and conquerors.

It is a good thing we can count on the 45 members of the Bloc Quebecois. It is a good thing that we can count on these members to unconditionally defend Quebec, its national assembly and the freedom of its people and that we are not in the same situation as in 1982 when we had 74 Liberal members from Quebec in this House who supported the unilateral patriation of the constitution

initiated by Mr. Trudeau. They ignored the national assembly's near unanimity against the unilateral patriation of the constitution.

We, in the Bloc Quebecois, will stand up to fight on behalf of Quebecers, for their right to freedom, to freedom of choice, and their right to democracy, a healthy democracy the government is trying to tarnish in this House with the complicity of 26 Liberal members from Quebec who are willing to help the English Canadian majority do its dirty work.

The report of the Standing Committee on Finance's Liberal majority is also weak in that it makes no reference to employment insurance, as I said in my introduction.

People came to tell us that EI eligibility requirements have become so restrictive that it is virtually impossible for 58% of unemployed workers, who pay premiums when they are not unemployed, to receive EI benefits.

Some people also came to tell us that as unemployed workers they were considered as abusers and cheaters and that they were harassed day after day and treated as if they were criminals.

This government has become the government of chronic and institutionalized impossibility. Again, I want to make a parallel with the bill introduced by the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs to establish a framework for the Quebec democracy.

For example, the bill provides that following a referendum in Quebec the House of Commons, which is made up of a majority of representatives from English Canada, will determine whether there is a clear majority of Quebecers who support secession. To that end, the House of Commons will take into account the "size of the majority". Will there ever be a majority large enough to be acceptable to this government? No.

The Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs even repeated today that, whether the question is clear or not, the federal government will not allow Canada to be broken up.

What is the point of tabling a bill requiring clarity when the government will not recognize the result of a Quebec referendum, even if the result is clear?

The bill also refers to the percentage of voters who will have voted and to any other matters considered to be relevant. This provision really opens the door to a very broad interpretation which will ultimately make it impossible to recognize the result of a Quebec referendum.

• (1605)

The bill also provides that the views of the political parties and the Senate be taken into account. Can you believe it? Senators

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would be consulted to give their opinion on a democratic process when they are not even elected? This bill is truly Kafkaesque and the end result is that it will be impossible for the House of Commons to recognize the referendum result.

It provides that the House of Commons will take into account any other relevant views on the majority. Are they going to ask Howard Galganov, Keith Anderson, Guy Bertrand and, while they are at it, Youppi, for their opinion on such an important issue, an issue that has to do with the free and democratic choice of Quebecers to create an independent country? This makes no sense.

It bears a strange resemblance to the way the EI system has been run for two years. What we heard in the Standing Committee on Finance was that the government disqualified most people who normally should have received benefits. The government is going after unemployed workers.

Here again the situation is similar. First, the government goes after unemployed workers and then it goes after all voters in Quebec. Their right to choose is being taken away. The exercise of democracy in Quebec's referendums is being devalued. Quebecers are being treated like children, as are unemployed workers when they are monitored day after day and identified, almost as though they were setting out to cheat the system. It is becoming ridiculous.

There is another similarity between what witnesses had to say about the EI system and the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs' bill.

People told the committee that they were viewed by the system and by those enforcing it across Canada, based on decisions made here in the House, as cheaters. This is another big similarity with the bill introduced by the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, the member for Saint-Laurent—Cartierville.

The Liberal members accuse unemployed workers of defrauding the system and now, with the bill introduced by the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, they are assuming and insinuating—and this is serious; members should listen carefully to what I am about to say—that all Quebecers are doing the same thing with democracy. Government members are insinuating that Quebecers are not playing by the democratic rules.

**An hon. member:** That is terrible.

**Mr. Yvan Loubier:** They are considered minors, immature children who need adult guides such as the federal Liberals and the federalists in general, children who need guardians and those supreme possessors of the truth, which the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, the Prime Minister and the federalists in general are, to help them make a free choice within a democratic system.

In short, the federalists in this House have turned into the neo-colonialists of Canada. They have become the leaders of what

is becoming more and more like a banana republic, who are all excited at the prospect of crushing those whom they still consider the “white niggers of America”, to borrow the expression of Pierre Vallières.

I have a bit of news for them. The Quebec people are too proud to stand for such treatment. The Quebec people are too proud to allow themselves to be crushed. They will stand up against this with the help of the Bloc Québécois here in this Chamber.

In order to be certain that my message is properly understood I will quote, if I may, two excerpts in English from statements made by René Lévesque in May 1980 after the Quebec referendum and by Robert Bourassa after the failure of the Meech Lake agreement.

[English]

Regardless of the result... it is now undisputed and indisputable that Quebec constitutes a distinct national community able to choose its constitutional status for itself, without outside interference. This right to control their own national destiny is the most fundamental right the people of Quebec possess.

[Translation]

That is the end of the quote from Mr. Lévesque's statement of June 11, 1980, after the first Quebec referendum.

• (1610)

After that came the failure of the Meech Lake agreement, in which considered Quebec as something very minor, a distinct society, but rejected totally by Canada. Not only was there the death kiss of Clyde Wells and the actions of the present Prime Minister, but Canada too rejected this minimal agreement. In economics we say “minimum minimorum”, and there is nothing smaller than that.

Here is what Mr. Bourassa had to say after the failure of Meech.

[English]

“English Canada must clearly understand that no matter what anyone says or does, Quebec is and always will be a distinct society that is free and able to control its own destiny and its own development”.

[Translation]

Those are the words of Mr. Bourassa. In other words, Quebec alone will decide its future and neither the people across the way nor the English Canadians are going to come and tell us how to vote in the next referendum on sovereignty.

When the Prime Minister is faulted for this, he who has been involved in dirty dealings with Quebec since the beginning of his political career, that little guy from Shawinagan, the member for

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Saint-Maurice, he always comes back with the same quote, which we have heard a good 40 times in the 6 years we have been dealing with him: only the weak resort to insults.

I agree with him on that, and I would point out that if that is so then he must be very weak indeed. Do you know why? On five significant occasions during his political career, this man insulted millions of Quebecers. He insulted them all.

First, in 1980 Quebecers were told that to say no to the referendum on sovereignty was to say yes to renewed federalism. We found out later on what it really meant. It was a pack of lies. This man was involved in this first fight against Quebec's legitimate aspirations.

Then in 1981 there was the night of the long knives. Taking advantage of the absence of Quebecers, especially Mr. Lévesque, the current Prime Minister plotted against Quebec in the kitchens of the Château Laurier Hotel together with representatives of other provinces—it has been called the night of the long knives—to isolate Quebec, to hurt it again. Already they were talking about unilaterally patriating the constitution. This was the second insult to Quebecers.

The third insult came in 1982 when the Canadian constitution was indeed patriated in spite of the nearly unanimous opposition of the national assembly. This was yet another insult to Quebecers.

In 1990 there was the failure of Meech Lake. The other day I heard the Prime Minister say "I was not there". Negotiations were going on and this charming gentleman was standing in the corridor talking on his cellphone to Sharon Carstairs, the then leader of the opposition in the Manitoba legislature, who was fighting tooth and nail against the Meech Lake accord.

A few weeks after the failure of Meech Lake, he embraced Clyde Wells. I do not know if he embraced him for reasons other than his fierce opposition to the Meech Lake accord and his crusade against Quebecers. If so, he should tell us.

In 1997, during the referendum on sovereignty, he organized an extraordinary love-in saying once again "Quebecers, you will be recognized if you vote no to sovereignty". What happened since 1997? They still spit on Quebec and people across the way still work against Quebec. The same man is once again insulting millions of Quebecers.

Finally in December 1999, this month, the little guy from Shawinigan found the worst insult possible by putting seven million Quebecers under some form of custody, under mandatory supervision, as if they were cheaters, dishonest people whose enlightened choice of sovereignty was a crime.

How weak must the Prime Minister be to resort to such measures. As the old saying goes: insults are the weak man's

weapons. Since the beginning of his political career he has constantly insulted millions of Quebecers.

• (1615)

Considering this bill in light of the way parliament and the governor in council operate and thinking of the influence enjoyed by the Prime Minister's Office and the Prime Minister himself, we have to ask ourselves if this man is a megalomaniac. Is it possible for such a man, under our current political system, to have exceptional power and a veto on the future of Quebecers, on the future of a whole nation?

It is the Prime Minister's office that decides. This means that under this process, under this bill that sets so many strict criteria for recognizing the result of a referendum or the clarity of a question, it is the Prime Minister, the little guy from Shawinigan, who will decide the future of seven million Quebecers. This cannot be. I cannot believe that we have reached that point in Canada, that we have practically become a banana republic, that the destiny of a whole people will be determined by one person.

Once again we have news for the Prime Minister. He may think and do what he wants but he will never prevent Quebecers from controlling their destiny, from choosing in a free and democratic way. There is nothing more democratic than the election and referendum process in Quebec. These people will not decide for Quebecers.

There are rather interesting things, particularly in international law. Among others, there is the 1975 Helsinki charter signed by former Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau. What does that charter say? It says that participating states, those that signed the charter, including Canada:

—respect the equal rights of peoples and their right to self-determination, acting at all times in conformity with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

By virtue of the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, all peoples always have the right, in full freedom, to determine, when and as they wish, their internal and external political status, without external interference, and to pursue as they wish their political, economic, social and cultural development.

The participating States reaffirm the universal significance of respect for and effective exercise of equal rights and self-determination of peoples for the development of friendly relations among themselves as among all States; they also recall the importance of the elimination—

Canada signed that agreement and we are lucky enough to have not only that charter but a whole series of international laws that make it easier for people to achieve sovereignty. In Quebec, we are also lucky to have 44 Bloc Québécois members who, contrary to the 74 federal Liberal members elected in 1982, will stand up and fight against a government that has the audacity to deprive Quebec of its freedom and to restrict its democratic spirit.

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**Mr. Paul Mercier (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in his brilliant remarks, my colleague mentioned the 26 Liberal members opposite who are about to pass an anti-Quebec bill.

In this prebudget context, does he think the estimates should provide for their 780 pieces of silver, that is 30 for each one of them?

**Mr. Yvan Loubier:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. As I said, it is unfortunate that throughout the history of mankind some people have knowingly collaborated with the conquerors against their own people.

• (1620)

We have the same situation right now in Canada: 26 Liberal members from Quebec agree when the intergovernmental affairs minister and the little guy, the very little guy from Shawinigan, the Prime Minister, introduce a bill limiting the freedom of choice of Quebecers and preventing them from going through a normal democratic process that has been used many times in the past.

Do members opposite think democracy is lacking in Quebec, and that Quebecers are flouting democracy? These 26 Liberal members from Quebec seem to think so. If this is not what they think, if they believe Quebec will abide by the democratic process and that the national assembly will ultimately be responsible for the referendum question and the interpretation of the results, they will not support this bill.

The foreign affairs minister keeps repeating that he is working very hard for Quebec. He yelled to members of the Bloc Québécois that we are exaggerating, that we do not speak the truth, that Canada should have its say in the decision on Quebec's political and constitutional status.

It is unfortunate that 26 Liberal members have joined forces with the English speaking majority in Canada to deny their own people the right to choose legitimately and democratically the future of an independent Quebec.

**Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot for his speech.

The Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs talks about clarity. Is he not in fact imposing his vision of clarity, imposing his question, and above all blocking Quebec's horizon in such a way that we will have no other choice but to decide between the status quo and a totally indefensible option, when it comes right down to it?

Has he not decided in the end to put aside what all Quebecers want, an option allowing them to become sovereign and to have a modern relationship on this planet for tomorrow, an appropriate relationship allowing Quebecers to make all the decisions concern-

ing themselves, to have their voice heard in the community of nations and to have a correct relationship with Canada, instead of the nasty climate the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs obstinately persists in creating with his current attitude?

**Mr. Yvan Loubier:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague has been very eloquent and has put the finger on the problem.

Indeed, yesterday the cat was let out of the bag. When the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs said that, whether the question is clear or not, he does not want Quebecers to decide democratically on sovereignty, what is the point of introducing a bill?

It is not the question and its outcome that bother the government, and particularly the little member for Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs. What bothers him is the content. What bothers him is the possibility that Quebec might become a sovereign country.

Besides, that man has changed his mind. Here is what the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs had to say in 1994. He said that the 1995 referendum was sufficiently clear.

Still in 1994, he added "Ottawa's insistence on using the term separation in the question has no basis in law".

The third thing he said, again in 1994, was. "Ultimately, the terms sovereignty, independence, separation and secession are synonymous".

Today he tells us "We will consider the clarity of the question, the terms used, so that they are the real terms, secession, the breakup of Canada". If these are not scare tactics, I do not know what is.

Let us be frank. This is what is going on on the other side of the House, as we have seen and as Quebecers will see as we bring all this out. Let them admit that they have just sold out Quebec, that they are going to prevent it from using a democratic process to attain its independence. Let them admit it. That is the real purpose of this bill. This is the beginning of the pre-referendum campaign and the scare-mongering. They are telling Quebecers that they will not have the backing of the law if they answer this question.

• (1625)

What is even sadder, and we saw this recently, is that during the 30-day period after they have forced the question out of the national assembly, they will debate the clarity of the question when Quebec is already fully launched into a referendum campaign.

Yes, it is sad. We will be right in the middle of a democratic process and these people will be imposing a process on us that smacks of apartheid.

**Mr. André Harvey (Chicoutimi, PC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to take advantage of the rationality of our colleague, the member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot. I believe this bill was not introduced for very noble reasons.

I would like to know his opinion on the following. Is it possible that this bill was introduced for purely political reasons?

The Prime Minister reads the opinion polls. He has seen the outcome of provincial elections in the Atlantic region: three Tory governments out of four. He sees the polls in Ontario. He sees the relatively good showing of his long time enemy, Mr. Clark, who is certainly doing better in the polls than one year ago.

Would my colleague agree with my analysis, which, albeit superficial, is logical? That strategy reminds me of the declaration the Prime Minister made two weeks before the 1997 election when he talked about 50% plus one. I say this for the benefit of my Bloc Québécois colleagues.

Unfortunately, at the time we lost several ridings to the Bloc in Quebec. I suspect the Prime Minister is now using exactly the same election-minded strategy and is thinking “I need at least 40 Bloc members in Quebec and 60 Reform members in western Canada so that we can squeeze through with 38 or 40% of the vote”.

I have a feeling this bill was introduced for very practical reasons and not for reasons relating to the referendum.

**Mr. Yvan Loubier:** My dear colleague from Chicoutimi is right. Moreover, this has always been a basic fact about the career of the Prime Minister of Canada. When the government starts to drop in the polls, the best way to raise its popularity quotient, in Canada in particular, is to dump on Quebec and Quebecers. Heaping scorn on Quebecers is the right approach. The more a Liberal member dumps on Quebecers the higher the Liberals go in the polls.

I agree with my colleague. Probably he too looks at the polls relating to the Bloc Québécois members and the rise in popularity of his leader, which has gone up constantly for the past year and a half. This I think is what motivates him to get tough with Quebec and to continue the dirty tricks he has always been up to.

I have referred to the patriation of the constitution. He was there. The Prime Minister, that little little guy from Shawinigan, was there. He is the one who cooked up that procedure one night at the Chateau Laurier, a concerted effort by the federal government and nine Canadian provinces to crush Quebec, to marginalize it, to strong-arm it.

He was also, along with Mr. Trudeau, behind the unilateral patriation of the constitution in 1982, despite the near unanimity of

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the national assembly against it. Then there was Meech, as I have said before. Though he says “I wasn’t even there for Meech”, that is not true. We were here. We walked around. We saw the Prime Minister in a corridor with his cellphone, and Sharon Carstairs, one of his buddies, was there working against the accord.

How about Clyde Wells, the embrace—and I am not familiar with the habits of the Prime Minister—but yes I agree with the hon. member. This was electioneering. Dumping on the Quebec to score better in the Canada-wide polls.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member but the time for questions and comments is up.

[English]

**Mr. Werner Schmidt:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. In the interests of the short time we have left before Christmas and the fact that a number of petitions have been given to us for presentation to the House, I wonder if we could get through the usual Routine Proceedings. I suggest that we present petitions at this point. It is my understanding that if we could get the unanimous consent of the House, we could present some petitions. My hon. colleague from Calgary Centre has a number of petitions to present and so do I.

● (1630)

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent to proceed with petitions at this time?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**An hon. member:** No.

[Translation]

**Mr. Roy Cullen (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in a way, I thank the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot for launching this very important debate on the direction we want to give to the year 2000 budget.

[English]

I would not necessarily agree with the points he made in his opening comments and there was some digression later in terms of the clarity bill. But on the question of transfers, Canadians are clear that Quebec gets its share of the federal transfers, in fact more than 50% of the equalization payments. That is what this House is about. That is what this debate is all about. That is how democracy works.

It is my privilege and pleasure to lead off today’s debate, a debate addressing what will likely be one of the most important budgets in modern Canadian history. This happy chore has been given to me by the finance minister.

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The finance minister is in Berlin chairing the inaugural meeting of the G-20, a body dedicated to strengthening and stabilizing the world's financial architecture. The minister has asked me to express his thanks and appreciation to the hon. members of the finance committee for their committed efforts in what was truly a national odyssey to hear the views of Canadians and for the quality of that work in synthesizing and reporting those views.

Today's debate is another important stage in the process of prebudget consultation introduced by this government. It is a process that many today take for granted. Let us remember what a dramatic change it represents compared to earlier decades when budgets seemed to be prepared in not so splendid isolation from the public and the emphasis seemed to be on backroom bartering rather than on public discussion and debate.

Many members of the House have had prebudget consultations and town hall meetings in their ridings across Canada. I hosted a prebudget consultation in my riding of Etobicoke North on October 21. A large number of my constituents came forward to present their views on this very important budget. They told me that they wanted a balanced approach. That was the opinion of the constituents in my riding and I look forward to the debate on the budget 2000 by members in the House of Commons.

To help set the stage for this debate, I remind all hon. members of some of the important elements of our current economic and fiscal performance. It is these elements that set the context in terms of opportunities and also real limits for the 2000 budget.

As the minister reported to the committee in his fall economic and fiscal update last month, our national economy is strong with one of the best growth rates among the G-7 major industrialized nations and a number one record for creating jobs.

[*Translation*]

These results are due in great part to the fact that we were able to put our federal fiscal house in order. The time when we ended up with a deficit and an increase in our public debt year after year is over. For two years in a row now, we have had a surplus, something we had not seen since 1951-1952, almost 50 years.

[*English*]

The government is committed to maintaining this record of fiscal responsibility as the unyielding foundation for all policy initiatives.

Looking ahead based on the average of forecasts by a group of Canada's leading private sector economists, this record of annual fiscal surpluses should grow from \$5.5 billion in 2000-01 to \$23 billion in 2004-05. This is a well deserved dividend that Canadians have earned through their support of the tough fiscal choices we had to make in bringing Canada's books back into balance. Of course those are impressive numbers but we must never let them

tempt us into losing sight of the need for continued financial probity and prudence.

• (1635)

As the minister said to our committee, we live in a volatile global economy. Offshore events can buffet us overnight, sharply reducing future revenues from today's planning basis. That is why the government is sticking with the advice of the leading economists we consulted with and using real caution in our planning projections. This includes deducting our yearly \$3 billion contingency reserve and a significant prudence factor before we arrived at those surplus estimates.

While the update does offer a five year forecast for discussion and planning purposes, we should and we will continue to take budget decisions only within a rolling two year time horizon. This is something I hope hon. members will address in the debate to come.

It was through near term and real term targets that we made a reality of deficit elimination. That is how we can ensure that the government does not commit long term financial resources today for tax cuts for important national investments, popular as these may be, at the risk of a return to punishing deficits in years to come.

**Hon. Jim Peterson:** Never again.

**Mr. Roy Cullen:** Never again.

That being said, I am sure most hon. members will agree that there are actions that must be taken, investments that should be made to strengthen our economy and provide Canadians with the prospect of better incomes, a higher quality of life and increased security and opportunity.

The committee's report highlights some excellent suggestions, but let me note that two of the commitments that this government has already acted upon, debt relief and tax relief, are a critical part of a context for the upcoming budget and for today's debate. First, we will continue to reduce the debt load on the economy and its taxpayers. Second, we will continue to reduce taxes.

It is a fact that we have already made some headway on our national debt.

[*Translation*]

The last two years, with the debt decreasing by some \$6.4 billion, we were able to save more than \$300 million in interest every year.

And there is more good news. We have actually paid down debt previously borrowed in financial markets by almost \$16.4 billion. These achievements in combination with sustained economic growth also contributed to the reduction of the debt to GDP ratio. This ratio assesses our debt according to the size of our economy.

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In 1995-96 that ratio peaked at 71.2%. In other words, our debt was equal to nearly three-quarters of our entire yearly economic output. For 1998-99 that ratio was down to 64.4%. This marks the third consecutive annual decline in the debt to GDP ratio.

By the way, there is another important comparison that should be highlighted. If one uses comparable accounting standards, our federal fiscal turnaround, combined with the positive fiscal performance of most Canadian provinces, means that on a total government basis Canada has achieved the largest improvement in its fiscal balance of all the G-7 nations since 1992.

Let me emphasize to all hon. members and all Canadians that such fiscal improvements are not abstract accounting achievements. Combined with our commitment to low inflation, they have contributed directly to keeping interest rates down. Gone are the days when Canadian rates were axiomatically higher than U.S. rates. In fact our rates are generally equal to, if not lower than, American rates.

But Canada's financial challenges are not over. We have to stay on track and that includes getting our debt burden down further. Five years ago 36 cents out of each federal revenue dollar went to pay interest on the debt. However because of our financial progress the portion of each revenue dollar eaten up by interest charges is down to 27 cents. That is progress, but it is still too high.

• (1640)

This is money that could otherwise be used to cut taxes, or for health care, or for investing in knowledge and innovation. For this reason we are continuing with our debt repayment plan.

*[Translation]*

We will continue to include every year in the budget a \$3 billion contingency reserve. This will ensure that the government will be in a position to fulfil its obligations toward Canadians without ending with a deficit because of some unforeseen economic hardship. If the contingency reserve is not needed it will be applied to the debt.

*[English]*

Paying down absolute debt is only part of our strategy. We will continue to make important investments in strengthening our economy, such as boosting our national research capability and boosting knowledge, skills and training. The dynamic at work here is clear and concrete. The combination of a shrinking debt and a growing economy work together to make the burden of debt fall faster. Just like a family with a mortgage, the more one earns and the more one pays down, the lighter the load.

It is this consistent strategy of falling debt and a growing economy that will help Canada and Canadians build a foundation for success in the 21st century.

This takes me to the second firm commitment I want to highlight. That is continued tax reduction. With the end of the era of deficits and growing debt, our government has moved to cut taxes for all Canadians. Quite simply, people have the right to expect that each year we will bring down taxes. It is not a matter of debate. Tax reduction is essential to secure strong and sustained economic growth. We may debate the means and the pace, but from the point of view of our government, reducing taxes is not a debatable item.

What is more, we have taken some actions already. The actions taken in the 1998 and 1999 federal budgets have removed 600,000 low income Canadians from the federal tax rolls. The combined actions taken in the last three budgets mean that the personal income tax relief for Canadians will total \$7.5 billion in 1999-2000. That is about 10% of all personal income taxes. For families with children, total personal income tax relief provided in the last three budgets represents an average of 16% reduction in their tax burden. That is families with children.

We are going to do much more. This process continued the day of the minister's update presentation itself when we announced that for the sixth year in a row, employment insurance premiums will be reduced from \$2.55 to \$2.40 for each \$100 of insurable earnings starting this January 1. This means that employees and employers will save a further \$1.2 billion next year, bringing total savings, compared to the rate that prevailed in 1994, to \$5.2 billion.

Looking beyond that, as the Speech from the Throne and the fall update both emphasized, in the 2000 budget we will spell out a multi-year plan to cut taxes further and we will explain how we intend to carry it out. This plan will be based on a number of key principles.

Our approach must be fair which means starting with those who need it most: middle and low income earners, especially families with children. We will focus initially on personal income taxes, since that is where we are most out of line. We will also have to ensure that Canada has an internationally competitive business tax system. Finally, we will not finance tax relief with borrowed money because that just means an inevitable return to higher taxes in the future.

Suggestions on how best to implement further tax reduction and by how much are important elements of the finance committee's report.

• (1645)

I know that the minister and his team are studying the report very closely. I congratulate the chairman and all members of the Standing Committee on Finance for such a comprehensive and detailed report.

I know the minister will be very interested in the ideas and criticisms that each and every hon. member can add in the House

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today. I encourage my hon. colleagues from all parties to provide their own positive, concrete suggestions.

I hope my few remarks have put some of these issues in some context, but I am sure we will not agree on everything that should go into the year 2000 budget. However, it is a process that is respected and it is very worthwhile having the debate in the House of Commons because budget 2000 will likely set the tone and thrust for Canada's continuing growth and security in the new millennium.

[Translation]

**The Deputy Speaker:** It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Lethbridge, Trade; the hon. member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, CSIS; the hon. member for Okanagan—Coquihalla, National Defence.

**Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the member's speech and I am a little surprised that the Liberals do not realize that ultimately there are two priorities when it comes to the budget.

First, they must put some money back into the transfer payments to the provinces to help them deal with their responsibilities in the areas of education, health and social assistance. A survey showed that 54% of Quebecers think this is the top priority. The second choice got 17% or 18%.

Should this not be the first thing to consider when deciding how to reinvest the federal government's surpluses? Another measure urgently required is to really make the employment insurance system an income supplement so as to put a stop to the impoverishment being inflicted by the federal government on all regions with seasonal industries, particularly in Quebec. That would ensure that the income of someone who is employed 20, 22 or 23 weeks per year is not less than it was in 1994 before the Liberals came to power.

Should those two measures not be taken expeditiously by the federal government to try and correct the impoverishment the Liberals have brought about through their budget measures and decisions thereby strangling the provinces and the unemployed?

**Mr. Roy Cullen:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question but I believe that that cuts in transfers are things of the past because the minimum amount of the CHST has now been increased to \$12.5 billion, which means \$1.8 billion more for Quebec over five years. Moreover, \$11.5 billion have already been put into the CHST. This means \$2.7 billion more for Quebec.

I could go on and on. Equalization gives Quebec \$2.8 billion more over five years, and Quebec now receives about half of the money available in the equalization fund, or about \$4.5 billion per year.

[English]

In last year's budget, the government injected \$11.5 billion into the CHST for health care and Quebec was a recipient of that. Whether the CHST should be augmented further is a very debatable point, which is the purpose of this discussion.

With respect to the question around employment insurance, Canadians understand and appreciate that the government had to take some very decisive action on this. Would everybody in the House agree that every measure we took was perfect? Would everyone in the House agree that perhaps there are some adjustments that need to be made? Perhaps. That is why we are having this debate. However, to say that we should fundamentally go back and re-open EI as it once was, I do not think Canadians would support that.

• (1650)

**Mrs. Michelle Dockrill (Bras d'Or—Cape Breton, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, when I listened to the member from the government side talk about how prosperous Canada is, I found myself sitting here trying to figure out if he and I both live in the same country.

If I take the member at his words with respect to how well we are doing in Canada, could he explain why we have seen a steady increase in child poverty over the last 10 years? There will be 1.5 million Canadian kids going to bed hungry tonight as we speak. We have seen thousands of protesters on the Hill with respect to the homeless. Thirty-six per cent of the people who are unemployed in the country do not qualify for unemployment. We have students carrying high debt loads by trying to access higher education. We have people on stretchers in emergency rooms.

Can he explain to me how this is happening in such a prosperous country?

**Mr. Roy Cullen:** Mr. Speaker, the member forgets that during the term of this government unemployment has declined. It is a generational switch. We are down to 6.9% and we will take it down further.

The member opposite talks about child poverty. The latest data shows that the incidence of children living in low income families declined from 21.1% in 1996 to 19.8% in 1997. Is that good enough? Probably not. As a result, 100,000 fewer children are living in families with low incomes.

However, a real problem remains and there is room for action. This government has acted on this with the child benefit program, with a huge commitment of approximately \$7 billion annually once it is fully in place.



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While the member talks about this doom and gloom scenario, we should recognize the huge progress that we have made and the progress we will make in the future. With a growing and strong economy, we will be able to devote more resources to the issues that the member is referring to. If we had not taken the measures that were needed to bring the deficit under control, we would not be having this debate today. We would still be reducing the deficit. We have achieved that and we now have to have a good debate on what to do with the surpluses.

**Mr. Jean Dubé (Madawaska—Restigouche, PC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the answer by the hon. member. If I clearly understood his response to the question from the opposition, the government is not ready to look at employment insurance and the effect that employment insurance has had on many Canadians in Canada. Am I clear on that?

Could the member also comment on whether the government would be in the position it is today if it was not for free trade, which has brought export up from \$80 billion to \$280 billion? As well, would the government be in this position if it was not for the GST, which this government said it would scrap in the last election? This year the GST brought \$24 billion into the federal coffers. Does the member think that the government would be in that position today if it was not for these measures which were brought in by the Conservative government?

**Mr. Roy Cullen:** Mr. Speaker, if the member checks the blues he will learn that what I actually said about EI was that no one on the government side or any member in the House would say that everything is perfect with EI.

I also said that a very strong point would have to be made to cause the government to go back to the days before we reinvented EI. To say that there are not some areas that perhaps need some fine tuning is one thing, but I do not think we really want to go back to the days when we had a situation where EI was causing some fiscal pressures and problems for the government and for all Canadians.

I acknowledge that with the international liberalization of trade, Canada as a major exporting nation has benefited from that. That is very much part of the economic success that we are now experiencing.

• (1655 )

I will highlight some measures that this government can take some credit for, such as low interest rates, which is often forgotten in the debate. Because of the low interest rates today, the average family with a \$100,000 mortgage save something like \$3,000 a year.

Business investment has much improved with low interest rates. I know this from my days in the private sector where decisions were being made to invest in the United States because of the cost of capital differential. That has now been removed.

As well, the monetary policy of the Bank of Canada has created a situation where inflation is being moderated. That has also contributed to the economic success of Canada and has created a situation in the country where Canadians are feeling more confident today than they have ever been and certainly more confident than they were in the days of the Tory regime.

**Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise and speak on what has become, with very short notice, the prebudget debate this afternoon. Having said that, I am pleased to stand and represent not only my constituents but also my party on this issue.

The first concern I have with the majority report that really reflects the position of the government members on the finance committee is that I feel that some of the recommendations in it are completely insincere. I want to expand on that.

The first point is that there were headlines after this report was leaked. Sadly, it was leaked, as it always is, and as we have seen with so many different committees over the last few years. The headlines indicated that the majority report was calling for about \$46 billion in tax relief.

Representing a party that has long called for major tax relief in the country, I certainly do not object to the majority report of the finance committee calling for big tax relief. We favour that completely. We believe that one of the greatest errors the government has ever made was to continue to raise taxes. It has hurt Canadian taxpayers tremendously.

However, we doubt the sincerity of that recommendation. The reason we doubt the sincerity of the recommendation is that a few paragraphs into the report we see the government claim that it wants to continue to adhere to the 50:50 promise.

For people who do not know what the 50:50 promise is, let me explain. In the 1997 election, the government made a promise that surpluses that ran up over the next several years would be divided; about 50% to new program spending and the remaining 50% to a combination of tax relief and debt reduction.

The government laid out the numbers in the fiscal and economic update in November when the finance minister told Canadians that the total surplus, best case scenario, would be \$95 billion, and that the amount we could count on to use for things like spending and tax relief would be \$67 billion. In that situation, it means that the finance committee report was calling to spend \$46 billion of that on tax relief, leaving very little for its huge commitment to spending increases.

This is obviously a bold attempt by the government members to have their cake and eat it too. They want to be the champions of tax relief saying "Oh, we believe in tax relief, but on the other hand, we believe in raising spending dramatically. We want to see 50% of

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the surplus devoted to new spending". They also care very much about the debt. They want to see debt repayment become a huge priority as well. They cannot have all of these things at the same time, but that is exactly what this report attempts to do.

So we very much doubt the sincerity of government members when they claim that this is what they want to do. These two things are simply incompatible. They contradict one another. We think it reflects very poorly on the whole report. We think it undermines the credibility of the whole report.

Starting from that very flawed approach, we think that the report, while having some merit in some areas, is also found lacking in many others, but the most glaring area is really the one I just mentioned.

• (1700)

I want to expand on that for a moment. This is a pattern that we see coming forward from the Liberal government. On one hand it promises that it wants to have tax relief. It promises that will come at some point in the future, but its rhetoric and its record show something completely different.

When we heard the fiscal and economic update from the finance minister at the beginning of November he talked ad nauseam about why we need to have lower taxes in Canada today. However we find out through the government's actions that it is raising taxes.

The best example is the millennium tax hike which will occur just two short weeks from today on January 1. Canadians will wake up from the big millennium party with a big tax headache because on January 1 in the new millennium, the year 2000, they will see all kinds of tax increases.

Let me recount some of them for the House. We will see Canada pension plan taxes go up as part of the largest tax increase in Canadian history. It is a double burden for the self-employed because they have to pay both halves of that huge 73% hike in Canada pension plan taxes. The government is saying that taxes are going down and that it wants taxes to go down, but at every opportunity it raises taxes.

The second example is how it is increasing personal income taxes. The government never misses an opportunity to say that it would never raise the tax rate. The government is being completely honest when it says that, but it is being somewhat deceptive when it alludes to only the tax rate because the overall tax burden will go up because of bracket creep.

Ever since 1986 when we deindexed the tax system in Canada under the previous Conservative government we have seen taxes increased automatically for hundreds of thousands of Canadians every year, without having a vote in this place to decide whether or not we should have an increase in taxes. It is an automatic tax

increase. The government benefits from that because it brings in about \$1 billion a year in new revenue.

I want to touch for a moment on the rhetoric of the government when it comes to how concerned it is about people on the low end of the income scale. Interestingly enough, people on the government side have made a career of telling the public how much they care about people who are struggling to get by, the people who have fallen through the cracks. Yet those people who have fallen through the cracks, the people on the low end of the income scale, are hurt more than anybody else in the tax system because of bracket creep.

It is interesting to note that every year 85,000 new taxpayers join the tax rolls because of bracket creep. They do not have any more purchasing power. They do not necessarily get a raise but they are dragged on to the tax rolls for the first time.

Why is that? It is because with every passing year not only are the tax brackets not indexed but also because the exemptions are not indexed. People end up losing the value of the exemptions which become less and less with every passing year due to inflation, due to the increase in the cost of living. These people are dragged unwillingly and unwittingly on to the tax rolls and start to pay taxes for the first time.

As the Liberals have been in power for the last six years they have increased revenue from people on the low end of the income scale, and indeed from all Canadians, by billions and billions and billions of dollars. This is a big tax increase that the Liberal government has pushed through and presides over. We never discuss it and never have a vote on it in the House of Commons, but nevertheless Canadians are much the poorer for it. That is one way in which the government continues to raise taxes.

On January 1 there will be another tax increase. This is another way that the government raises more revenue and people are less better off, without having a vote in the House of Commons.

• (1705)

Let me give one more example, for instance, the small business exemption. Small businesses in Canada have an exemption of \$200,000 below which they pay one rate of tax and above which they pay another rate of tax. That will also be eroded by inflation this year, so small businesses will see their taxes rise again through the big hike in Canada pension plan taxes and through the erosion of the exemption for small business. That is another way.

There are other examples which I could go into. My point is simply that the government on one hand says it is concerned about taxes and it is cutting taxes, but at every opportunity it raises taxes. That is what we will see on January 1. Its say one thing but does something completely different whenever it has a chance.

How does this hurt Canadian families, Canadian entrepreneurs and Canadian investors? There are different ways in which it has

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hurt them. The best way to bring that home, as we have tried to do over the last several weeks, is to recount the stories of many Canadians who sent us their paystubs to illustrate to the finance minister and to the government in the clearest possible way what happens to people's incomes when taxes are as high as they are.

Let me remind members of an issue I brought to the floor of the House a few weeks ago. I had a teacher from my riding send her paystub which showed that she had received a \$1,000 raise, but by the time the taxman got done with it, \$81 of the \$83 a month raise was gobbled up.

I know it sounds incredible, Mr. Speaker, and you look incredulous, but I can tell you we saw the paystub. We shared it with the media. We had Annalora Horch, the teacher from Medicine Hat, go to the bookkeeper of the school board and ask what was happening. The bookkeeper said that it simply reflected the tax tables for Alberta issued by Revenue Canada as of July 1, 1999. They were following exactly what the government told them they had to do. The result is that a \$1,000 raise becomes a \$24 raise, thanks to the tax increases of the government. We think that is terrible.

The member for Edmonton North raised the issue of Doreen, a worker from Winnipeg. Doreen sent us her paystub, her statutory holiday paystub. She had received statutory holiday pay of \$53, which is a small amount, but she was really concerned that \$30 or 60% of that \$53 went to pay taxes. I think that is ridiculous. I remember at the time the finance minister sort of mocked this. It is a small amount of money, I will agree, but every dollar is precious to people who are hard pressed and paying the highest taxes they have ever paid in Canadian history.

It is ridiculous that on the one hand we have the government saying it wants to reduce taxes but on the other hand we see taxes mounting ever upward.

I want to raise the instance of Andy. Andy is a mechanic in my riding. He works at Evergreen Implements in Brooks. He works in the town where I live. He has been a mechanic there for 27 years. He sent us his Christmas bonus paystub which showed that out of his bonus the finance minister got 42%.

Andy, Doreen and Annalora are the ones who are putting in the extra hours. They are the ones who are working their hearts and guts out for their families. They take all the risks. They do all the work, but who gets half the bonus? Who gets half the statutory holiday pay? Who gets half the Christmas pay? It is the finance minister.

If that is not the biggest destroyer of incentive I have ever seen, I do not know what is. It is ridiculous that to burden our people the way they are in Canada. They should be rewarded for hard work, productivity and entrepreneurship but sadly they are punished.

We must remember that taxing something effectively means that we get less of it. A tax is a price. When a tax is placed on something we get less of it. The higher jobs are taxed, the fewer jobs we get. We see that with every passing year as Canada pension plan taxes go up, or when employment insurance premiums do not go down nearly as much as they should.

• (1710)

I remind the House that the government is still raiding or confiscating \$7 billion a year of employer and employee premiums that do not go to pay more benefits and therefore should come back to employers and employees in the form of lower premiums. The government continues to raid that and as a result we see the taxes on jobs being far too high.

When we have high income taxes we have a high price placed on productivity and work. There is no incentive to work overtime any more. We wonder why we languish when it comes to productivity. The reason is that we pay a very high penalty when we work hard in Canada today.

What about entrepreneurship? There are myriad ways that the government punishes entrepreneurs. I have recounted some but I will go into that in a bit more detail. Before 1971 in Canada we did not have a tax on capital gains. Since that time we have an extraordinarily high tax on capital gains. The result is that we put a high price, a penalty really, on the great crime of investing in our economy.

One thing that has distinguished Canadians over the years is that people have been risk takers. We have been individualists to some degree. That may shock some people in the Chamber, but we have been rugged individualists. We have said that we wanted to create businesses, to start something that we could run ourselves and be our own bosses. As a result of the high capital capital gains taxes in Canada today, it is very difficult to accumulate capital to the point where we can start a business. The result is that many people leave the country.

The best example is what is going on right now in the high tech industry where we see all kinds of people who are trying to start businesses moving to the United States and other countries around the world. That is shameful.

Not only is it a shame to lose these people because of the economic impact, but we see families splitting up, families leaving the great country of Canada to go elsewhere. That is disgraceful. It is very disappointing to see the government be so sanguine about it, especially the Prime Minister who says "If you don't like our high taxes then just go to the United States". I think that is ridiculous.

We see it in other ways, even in consumption. The more consumption is taxed, the less consumption we have. That is rather obvious. For retailers in Canada that is a serious issue. Not long ago I spoke to Peter Woolford, head of the Retail Council of

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Canada. Mr. Woolford pointed out in testimony to a Reform Party committee that the domestic economy in Canada had never really recovered from the recession of the early 1990s. One reason for that is the high taxes on consumption. We see this at the provincial level and at the federal level. Part of the reason is that people have less disposable income and therefore cannot purchase in the first place.

Whenever we have these taxes we have what economists call a tax wedge, a difference between what consumers are willing to pay and what the seller is willing to sell for. The tax often serves as the wedge so no deal is struck between the two. The result is that a sale is not made. We need to make sales. We need to keep the economy moving for the economy to grow, to create wealth, prosperity, jobs, opportunity and hope, something for which Canada was known during the first 100 years of its existence but too often is no longer known for.

These are all prices that are placed on very productive behaviour. Now we in Canada bear the fruit of that in the form of a brain drain and an unemployment rate that is still far too high. The unemployment rate is about 60% higher than it is in the United States. It is certainly 60% higher or perhaps higher in relation to the historical level of employment in Canada. That is a huge concern. Government members take some comfort in an unemployment rate of about 7%, but to the unemployed it is not very much fun at all.

There are other ways in which the government punishes people through the tax system. In 1995 when the finance minister undertook a number of changes he asked that Revenue Canada hire a whole bunch of new auditors. The impact has been terrifying for people who are in the sad position of having these people visit their businesses. Let me cite an example.

• (1715)

One accountant in my hometown, Hugh Bevan, writes to me often about something that is so bizarre, but it makes sense because it is about government. If a farmer or a rancher buys a half-tonne truck or a three-quarter tonne truck with an extended cab, a log has to be kept indicating everywhere the truck travels. The reason is because somebody might be in the back of the truck who is not actually travelling on official business. This results in farmers and ranchers being forced to keep a log. With all of these compliance costs, people try to cheat the system and get around these things in various and sundry ways.

This is not productive. Instead of trying to wring every cent out of Canadians' pockets, when will the government make a solid commitment to cutting taxes, not some airy-fairy commitment that is contradicted in the document itself, such as we see in this finance committee report?

Canadians want lower taxes. Fairness and justice demands it. It is time the government quit talking about lowering taxes and

started doing it instead of giving us tax increases like we will see on January 1.

Let us end this Liberal rhetoric. We want to see lower taxes in Canada starting today. Therefore, I would move that the motion be amended by deleting all the words after "That" and substituting the following therefor: "the first report of the Standing Committee on Finance, presented on Friday, December 10, 1999, be now concurred in, but that it be recommitted to the Standing Committee on Finance with instruction that they amend the same, so as to recommend that the government re-index the income tax system to inflation by immediately eliminating bracket creep".

**The Deputy Speaker:** The Chair had grave reservations when the hon. member read his motion. He left out a word that I see is in the printed version, and that is that the report be "not" now concurred in. The member said "concurred in". Had that been his motion, it would have been out of order. But I see "not" in the printed version and I assume that he adopts that as what he intended to read.

**Hon. Jim Peterson:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I feel certain that the member's heart was telling him that he wanted to concur in this report.

**The Deputy Speaker:** We are not going to get into that debate. If the hon. member says the word "not" is in his motion, I will put the motion to the House:

That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after "That" and substituting the following therefor: "the first report of the Standing Committee on Finance, presented on Friday, December 10, 1999, be not now concurred in, but that it be recommitted to the Standing Committee on Finance with instruction that they amend the same, so as to recommend that the government re-index the income tax system to inflation by immediately eliminating bracket creep".

The question therefore is on the amendment.

**Mr. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Vaughan—King—Aurora, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to publicly thank the member for Medicine Hat for his work as a member of the finance committee. As the chair of that committee I certainly appreciate his efforts.

• (1720)

On the issue of tax relief, I draw to the attention of the House that the minority report tabled by the Reform Party states: "Outside of partnership and ideological differences, the need for tax relief and tax reform is very real. The official opposition has called for major tax relief. We will outline the size of our proposed tax relief in our January report".

I draw to the attention of the House the tax package that the House of Commons committee tabled. It is very important to

understand its major components. I cite the fact that the finance committee would like the government to adopt the following plan over the next five years. First, to increase the basic and spousal amounts by 15%, which would mean that the basic personal amounts for individuals would rise to \$8,200. This measure would take 500,000 Canadians off the tax rolls. It would lower the number of people on welfare and increase attachment to the workforce.

Second, we want to reduce the middle tax rate by three percentage points to 23%. This is in large part because hard-working, middle class Canadians worked so hard to defeat the deficit and give the Canadian government a surplus that they need to be rewarded.

Mr. Speaker, I will not cite the entire passage because you are signalling me to stop.

I want the hon. member for Medicine Hat to tell Canadians whether the figure in the Reform package will be over the \$46 billion in tax cuts announced by the finance committee.

**Mr. Monte Solberg:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my friend's comments. We think the finance committee report is a modest start toward tax relief. My friend does not have to convince me of the need for tax relief. Reformers have championed the idea for many years. We have been standing alone for tax relief for several years.

My friend does not have to convince us, but he certainly has to convince his friends in the Liberal Party that they need to get onboard and advocate tax relief. If he did that, they would not retain that commitment to the 50:50 spending promise, which can only mean billions upon billions of dollars in new spending, which is completely at odds with what he himself advocates in the form of tax relief.

[Translation]

**Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the member's speech and particularly to his motion in amendment. I have a short question for him.

He mentioned the have nots? Is the worst failure of the Liberal government, which has been in power since 1994, not to have contributed to the systematic impoverishment of the people who are already hurting in our society because of the employment insurance program and the cuts in the transfer payments?

The economy is doing well and that the unemployment rate is declining, yet we see increasing poverty, largely because of the government.

Is the federal government not to be blamed for this terrible situation where a country whose collective wealth is sizeable cannot distribute it in a way that would benefit everybody?

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[English]

**Mr. Monte Solberg:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend for his question. The Liberal government has contributed to the impoverishment of Canadians, but by a different means than my friend suggests. High taxes have caused many people to be in a situation where they cannot hire the number of people they would like to hire and therefore people without skills, traditionally people who are at the bottom of the socioeconomic scale, cannot benefit.

● (1725)

We see it through bracket creep, where people at the lowest end of the income scale are the ones who are punished the most by this insidious tax that passes every year without a vote in the House of Commons. We see it also through the homeless situation, where because of high taxes and excessive regulation the stock of rental housing has not increased. That hurts the homeless people immeasurably.

There are many ways that the Liberal government has hurt people on the low end of the income scale and I have recounted them.

**Mr. Richard M. Harris (Prince George—Bulkley Valley, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague from Medicine Hat for his excellent speech in the prebudget debate.

If he had more time for his speech he would have taken very great care to point out the examples of the provinces of Ontario and Alberta, which recognize the stimulation to the economy that tax relief brings, which has resulted in booming economies in both of those provinces.

Could my colleague enlighten particularly the Liberals, who obviously do not understand the real economic benefits of reducing taxes?

**Mr. Monte Solberg:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that very thoughtful question from my friend.

What has happened in Alberta and Ontario since those governments have taken charge is that we have seen a reduction in taxes, a reduction in debt and ultimately a huge increase in the number of people working in those provinces. What that has meant, under the governments of Mike Harris and Ralph Klein, is that hundreds of thousands of people are being brought into the workforce, some of them for the first time. They are given skills, experience, contacts and ultimately a wage. As a result of all those people working more money pours into the coffers.

What has happened as a result of that? More money is going into health care in both Alberta and Ontario than has ever gone into health care in those provinces, thanks to the provincial governments. On the other hand, we have the Liberal federal government, the supposed defender of medicare, cutting the life out of medicare, cutting ultimately \$21 billion out of medicare.

*Private Members' Business*

We can thank Mike Harris and Ralph Klein for helping health care recover at the provincial level. Thank goodness for them, voices of sanity in this country.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for Bruce—Grey on a brief question.

**Mr. Ovid L. Jackson (Bruce—Grey, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Medicine Hat speaks a lot of rhetoric. Members of the opposition are telling us to spend a lot of money. They keep comparing us to the United States.

In global trade the United States has 47% of the market share, the Japanese 17%, the Europeans 27% and we have about 20%. The American budget represents trillions of dollars. We have \$106 billion to spend. This government has done a great job with the budget. When it came in there was a \$42 billion deficit.

I wish Reform members would tell their constituents, Hugh, Andrew and Dorothy, that we have the best country in the world in which to live.

Since the government has come into power it has cut taxes over the last number years, and they have gone beyond bracket creep. The tax cuts provided over the last—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. I indicated to the hon. member that his comment and question would have to be very brief. I want him to draw his remarks to a quick conclusion because I have to give the hon. member for Medicine Hat time to respond.

**Mr. Ovid L. Jackson:** Where would the member find the money he is asking for farmers and the money he is asking for the RCMP? We have a great country with a great social program. That is why we are the best in the world. Where would he find all this money? Would he cut jobs?

**Mr. Monte Solberg:** Mr. Speaker, we have the greatest country in the world, but no thanks to this Liberal government which transferred a \$42 billion deficit on to the backs of taxpayers. That is irresponsible. That is not leadership; that is cowardice. We see it from this government every day. Canadians, frankly, are sick of it. They will not take it much longer. That is why the government is on its way out.

• (1730)

**Mr. Dan McTeague:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I was wondering if it might be possible to receive this evening the approval of the House on a bill that has been before the House on a private members' issue, Bill C-202, dealing with high speed chases.

I realize this is one of the last few sittings that we have. Under the circumstances, given that there may be some people who will

actually be injured or die, I am looking for the unanimous consent of the House that Bill C-202 be reported, given third reading and presented to the Senate.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I gather the hon. member is asking that the bill be deemed passed in effect. Is there unanimous consent?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Deputy Speaker:** It being 5.30 p.m., the House will proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's order paper.

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## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

### EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP)** moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should take immediate action to restore Employment Insurance benefits to seasonal workers.

**Mr. Richard M. Harris:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am going back to my riding tomorrow morning. Before I leave I would like to request that, because it is the Christmas season, perhaps the Bloc members and Liberal members would want to put their family feud to rest just for a few days and enjoy Christmas. I am sure they would be able to enjoy it far better if they were not worried about this little family tiff they are having.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I do not know what the point of the hon. member's intervention was but it was not a point of order.

[Translation]

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to rise today to present and debate Motion No. 222 on seasonal workers and the employment insurance.

The motion reads as follows:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should take immediate action to restore Employment Insurance benefits to seasonal workers.

The debate on this votable motion is an opportunity for my colleagues and myself to thoroughly look into the issue of seasonal work and try to find short, medium and long term solutions.

I introduced this motion in order to demystify seasonal work. People who work in seasonal industries are often called seasonal workers. We often forget that they are not seasonal workers; their jobs are seasonal.

The main reason I wanted to introduce this motion is the recent changes to the employment insurance plan. Through this debate, I want to highlight the negative impact of these changes on the lives of people who work in seasonal industries and of their families.

I want to highlight the important contribution of these workers to our country and our economy. But most of all, I want to engage my colleagues in an exchange in order to develop solutions that will certainly include a proposal to reform the employment insurance, but also proposals to diversify our country's seasonal economy.

First, it must be mentioned that seasonal work is very important for the Canadian economy. It accounts for one million direct jobs and contributes to the creation of thousands of others. A number of industries are seasonal by nature. A case in point are the industries which are weather-dependent such as fishing, logging, agriculture, mining, construction and tourism. There are other industries such as the automotive industry, education, and cultural industries.

Seasonal industries are an important variable in Canada's balance of payments. Net exportations of agricultural products, seafood, energy and mainly wood products are the main elements in Canada's balance of trade.

• (1735)

The tourism industry is the 12th largest economic sector.

In 1995, shipments by the construction industry were estimated at \$22.8 billion. That year, the building materials industry accounted for about 6% of the gross domestic product from manufacturing and it provided direct jobs to nearly 150,000 people across Canada.

In 1996, the forestry sector contributed \$20 billion to the Canadian economy. Activities in this sector accounted for 2.9% of the GDP. In 1997, national forestry exports were estimated at \$38.9 billion. Moreover, in 1997, the forestry sector provided 365,000 direct jobs.

As for the commercial fishery on the Atlantic and Pacific coasts, it was valued at \$1.6 billion in 1997. Fisherman from the Atlantic provinces are responsible for 74% of that amount.

Looking at these statistics, it is obvious that seasonal industries are important to our economy throughout the country. All these sectors make an important contribution not only to our economy but also to our quality of life.

Part time university professors contribute to the education of our young people, but their work often depends on university semesters.

### *Private Members' Business*

Who does not appreciate a nice lobster, especially here in Ottawa? We often tend to forget that before reaching our plate lobster had to be harvested by a fisherman and packed by a plant worker to be shipped to Ottawa.

Tourism is another example. A canoe rental business can hardly find clients in the middle of winter when rivers are frozen. Therefore, it provides work to its employees only 10 or 12 weeks out of the year, during the summer months.

[English]

Seasonal jobs are dispersed throughout Canadian industries. Their contribution to the Canadian economy goes far beyond the activity that is confined directly to the seasonal jobs themselves.

In the forestry sector for example, the harvesting of trees leads to primary sector activity in sawmills, pulp and paper, and plywood and panel board plants. Secondary manufacturing includes planing mills, engineered wood products, manufacturing of paper or cardboard products, wood re-manufacturing, prefab homes and wood doors and windows.

Seasonal activity in forestry generates year round activity in many more sectors.

[Translation]

In 1995, a working committee was set up to examine the issue of seasonal work and employment insurance. Its report contains findings that in my opinion are still valid today.

First, it draws attention to the fact that what is seasonal is not the workers but the jobs. Second, the committee found that the contribution of seasonal labour to the Canadian economy was largely ignored.

Furthermore, it noted that a negative attitude toward seasonal workers was emerging and that these workers were considered responsible for the temporary nature of their jobs.

Finally, it warned the Liberal government of the day that any change to employment insurance would disproportionately affect seasonal workers.

The government had in its possession a document that said what exactly the impact would be on seasonal workers but it chose to go ahead anyway.

What is the situation today? The eligibility criteria are too high and prevent many seasonal workers from receiving employment insurance benefits.

In addition, the government decided to punish workers who frequently claim employment insurance by making them subject to the intensity rule.

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The committee was right to say that the government had a negative attitude toward seasonal workers.

Instead of attacking seasonal workers, the employment insurance reform should have taken into account their particular conditions and created a system reflecting the reality of the labour market.

• (1740)

[*English*]

Seasonal work is a subject of special concern because those engaged in seasonal work have fewer alternatives than other workers and are therefore more dependent on EI. They cannot fish when the bait is frozen or cut trees in the spring thaw when roads turn to mud. Very often, workers in seasonal industries live in remote areas of the country where the only work is seasonal and things freeze up in the winter.

[*Translation*]

The working group has also predicted that the EI reform would have a negative impact on women. In many cases, women who work in fish plants are unable to meet the number of hours of work requirement to qualify for EI.

With the EI reform, the number of hours required to qualify has doubled in certain areas. Besides, the 910 hours required from newcomers on the labour market or from workers who have been away from the labour market for a time result in the exclusion of many women and young people.

This 910 hour requirement penalizes women who have decided to stay home to raise their children during their formative years. When they go back to work and the seasonal work ends, they do not have any income because they cannot meet that 910 hour requirement.

Why did the government choose to make those changes if it knew what the impact on women would be? Perhaps because it wanted to use the surplus accumulated in the EI fund thanks to all those restrictions to reduce the deficit and the debt.

In the last few weeks, we have talked about the rise in the number of children living in poverty. It is not hard to realize that the EI cuts have deprived mothers and fathers of benefits, and that their families suffer because of that.

Since many poor families are headed by single mothers, the fact that women do not qualify for EI has contributed directly to the increase in child poverty. The saddest thing of all is that this negative impact was very likely intentional.

The EI reform has had a negative impact on seasonal workers. This impact was predicted and can be observed today.

It is time to admit that errors were made. It is time to make changes so that seasonal workers can again qualify for EI premiums.

But the government must not stop there. I am often accused of suggesting EI as the solution to all problems. That it not true. Really.

What must be remembered is that the EI program is there to help workers who have, through no fault of their own, lost their job. It is a temporary measure to help during the transitional period, but this government is forgetting that this temporary measure is necessary for both workers and for the economy. When workers are denied EI premiums, small and medium size businesses suffer too.

Even the Liberals agreed with us. In 1993, when the Prime Minister was the leader of the opposition, he said:

By reducing benefits and further penalizing those who leave their jobs voluntarily, the government shows very little concern for the victims of the economic crisis. Instead of getting to the heart of the problem, it goes after the unemployed.

What happened to our Prime Minister? Perhaps the same thing that happened to the red book, the GST and all the rest.

The Prime Minister went on to say:

These measures will have a disturbing impact.

Is it not ironic that when he came to power our Prime Minister did exactly what he spoke out against? He went after unemployed workers and the result was very disturbing.

• (1745)

The Prime Minister was not the only one to oppose relentlessly the proposed changes to employment insurance. On July 31, 1989, my predecessor, Doug Young, said that the taxpayers of New Brunswick should vigorously oppose these changes, which would have serious consequences on the region.

I am prepared to give credit to the Liberals. They understood the situation before taking office in 1993. They knew that employment insurance was an important program that was part and parcel of the social fabric of our country.

I even believe that they know now that they are wrong. But the employment insurance fund is accumulating a surplus of \$7 billion every year and they do not want to give up what this surplus brings them. As I said before and continue to say, workers are the victims in this case and this is unacceptable.

My hon. colleagues opposite sometimes point out to me that workers are abusing the employment insurance program. But the workers are not the ones dependent on the employment insurance system, the Minister of Finance is. He cannot do without it and he relies on it.

But to talk about employment insurance is not good enough. The problem with seasonal industries is that we do not think in the long



term about the diversification of the economies dependent on these industries.

Seasonal work is found mainly in rural areas where natural resource development is the main activity.

It is not that people do not want to work. It is a situation where once their working season comes to an end, be it in forestry, the tourist industry, fishing or construction, there is no other work to be had.

Thus, apart from giving them access to the EI program, we must also invest to ensure economic diversification.

Too often these communities harvest the resource. For example, in communities like Caraquet, Shippagan, Lamèque, Bouctouche and Cap Pelé in New Brunswick, fish is caught and then sent to Japan for processing.

Why not do the processing at home? Why should we not do secondary and tertiary processing? Why do we not develop aquaculture, which could represent the future of fisheries?

However to develop such industries, we need a long term vision that builds on the experience and the know-how of all the players, investors, workers, community groups and elected officials, whatever their political affiliation.

For too long now Atlantic Canada has suffered because of decisions based on political motives rather than on the best interest of the communities. This has to change. We cannot go on like this.

The Liberals will have to stop giving away money only to their friends and start looking at the real economy and the way to develop it. What they are doing is the way things were done by politicians a century ago. It has to change. We have to work together to change things. We cannot go on like this. We need a long-term vision on how to develop the economy of our country and of our rural areas. As long as we do not do it, we will be missing the boat. We will be missing the boat and a great opportunity. We have to recognize the difference between rural Canada and urban areas.

We need to invest in our infrastructures so that our rural communities can become as competitive as our urban centres.

Again, in my province of New-Brunswick, the natural gas pipeline runs from Sable Island to the south, but does not go to the north. How do you expect northern New-Brunswick to compete with the south when the infrastructures serving these two areas are not the same?

Besides investing in the infrastructures, we have to invest in people. We have to give them some training. Not just any kind of training, but training in the industries that are liable to develop in their region.

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• (1750)

We have to try to improve access to training. In order to diversify the economy, we need to provide the workers with the support they need to get jobs in the new industries.

[English]

The working group, in looking at the seasonal worker and employment insurance, said:

What is lacking in many areas dependent on seasonal work is the infrastructure to make diversification possible, for example:

Core infrastructure such as transportation, telecommunications, basic services such as water, electricity and waste disposal;

Access to research institutions with the corporate-government and university liaisons and the means to develop and market research ideas;

Access to education and training institutions, both the buildings and the hardware and software to reach rural communities;

Access to financial institutions to bridge the financing requirements at a reasonable cost for start-up companies and companies in need of restructuring, rationalizing or expanding.

[Translation]

In other words, we need some planning. We have to determine which regions rely on seasonal work and then develop strategies based on their specific needs.

We have to remember that seasonal workers are here to stay. We will always want to eat lobster and need lumber to build our houses.

We have to stop penalizing seasonal workers and try to find solutions to extend the working season in the communities that rely on seasonal work.

While we wait for medium and long-term solutions, we need to make the EI benefits more accessible by reducing the number of working hours needed to qualify.

We have to stop hurting seasonal workers. We have to get rid of the intensity rule. And lastly, we have to increase the benefit rate to 60%.

I have submitted my short, medium and long-term solutions to the seasonal work problem and I look forward to hearing your suggestions.

[English]

**Mr. Charles Hubbard (Miramichi, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, it is a privilege to speak following my neighbour from the north of my constituency, the member for Acadie—Bathurst, and also my good friend from Madawaska—Restigouche in the far north.

I recognize the work the hon. member has done with EI. He has travelled the country. His background has been with the labour movement. When he speaks he is certainly speaking on behalf of his constituents and the many people he has worked with in the

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mining sector and other sectors of the labour congress over the last number of years.

I differ very basically on some of the points the hon. member is making. His tremendous energy should be directed more toward the creation of employment, the creation of job opportunities for those people who are in need of work. We heard the speech of the hon. member. I see that you read the report of our Atlantic caucus.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault):** I ask the hon. member to address his comments through the Chair.

**Mr. Charles Hubbard:** The hon. member read the report of our Atlantic caucus. In fact his speech reflected the need for infrastructure, the need for development of industry, the need for greater attention to the economy of those areas and, above all, the great advent of technology.

Great strides have been made in the province of New Brunswick, both with the previous two premiers and our new premier who was elected last summer. We hope he will be able to follow in the footsteps of the previous two premiers.

Tonight I want to mention that employment insurance is not simply a relationship between the government and the workers of the country. It is a three way relationship. Employers pay into the fund 1.4 times the amount put in by employees. We have to ensure that it is a joint fund administered by the government of the country. There has to be a relationship among employers, employees and the government.

• (1755)

The fund was changed in the early 1990s and again in 1995-96. There are certain points we all must be concerned about. The hon. member brought out a good number of those points in terms of women, the intensity clause and seasonal workers about which we are so much concerned.

Tonight we should salute people who work in our seasonal industries. We talk about the people needed in the basic resource based industries such as fisheries, agriculture, forestry and other sectors. About 40% of the country's total gross domestic product in terms of exports is from basic resource based industries. We have to be sure the seasonal workers who participate in those industries are looked after adequately.

The intensity clause is one of the most difficult. Many members on this side of the House are concerned with the definite penalty against people who participate in seasonal industries.

As the hon. member indicated, an employee draws from the program for 20 weeks. Each time he draws after that he is penalized by 1%, going down eventually to 50%, which is a direct attack upon people who are mostly involved in seasonal industries. We too are concerned about that penalty or that intensity clause.

The employment insurance program has many good parts to it. For example, I mention Nova Scotia which has a very good program for people at the lower end of the economic scale. Families earning less than approximately \$27,000 a year can receive a family supplement which will amount to approximately 80% of their earned income. That is a definite, positive aspect of the changes made in 1996.

We must also look at some government programs in terms of attempting to look at areas in need of more employment. We think of the former transitional jobs fund and, more specifically today, the Canada jobs fund. I see in the House tonight a number of members from New Brunswick. I think all of us from New Brunswick benefit from the Canada jobs fund.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** The problem is in my riding.

**Mr. Charles Hubbard:** Madam Speaker, the hon. member's constituency has benefited more from the Canada jobs fund and the transitional jobs fund than any constituency in the province of New Brunswick. If he looks at the figures he will find that.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** That is not right.

**Mr. Charles Hubbard:** Madam Speaker, he will have his opportunity. Hopefully he will give me mine.

The employment insurance program is under continuous review. We are attempting to look at some of the problems connected with people returning to the workforce after a period of being left out. We are looking at the fact that there are certain aspects of the program which will be brought to the attention of the minister. With them she would be able to come to the House to make changes to better improve the program for all Canadians.

The motion of the hon. member certainly needs to be amended because we might be led to believe that seasonal workers were left out of the program. Therefore I move the following amendment:

That the motion be amended by deleting all words after "immediate action to" and substituting therefor the following, "review employment insurance benefits for seasonal workers".

• (1800)

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault):** The amendment is in order. Debate is on the amendment.

**Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Wanuskewin, Ref.):** Madam Speaker, I appreciate the concerns my NDP colleague has brought to the House. It is truly a very important issue that needs to be addressed by the government. We will go along and take some second thought on the amendment. I am not sure that it is an adequate response to the problem of the incomes of seasonal workers. I will relate some of the reservations I have about it. I acknowledge that it is an important issue and the member is to be commended for having raised it in the House this evening.

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As was already said, it is a given that we have the reality of seasonal work in Canada. Certain businesses and industries in Canada have seasonal ups and downs regardless of the business cycle which means that fewer workers are needed at predictable times of the year. The result is that workers in those industries will apply for benefits at predictable times of the year on a repeated basis year after year.

Seasonal work is a reality in Canada, perhaps more so than in other countries because we have so many resource based industries compared to other countries around the world. As has been brought to our attention by the two previous speakers, the problem we have before us and the reason the motion is here today are because of the 1995 act and how it has affected seasonal workers. That is the reason we are debating this motion today. Seasonal workers are getting less in the way of benefits as a result of those changes to the unemployment insurance program introduced by the 1995 Employment Insurance Act.

The government member who spoke prior to me referred to the intensity rule which the act introduced. That rule in its first time coming into effect distinguishes between frequent and infrequent recipients of benefits under the EI program.

Frequent users of EI receive reduced benefits based on their previous use of the EI program. They are reduced by 1% when 20 weeks of benefits have been collected and may go as low as as 50%. They are not wiped out altogether but there is a significant 5% reduction depending on the frequency of previous claims. The lowest possible rate of 50% is in contrast with the standard rate of 55% for regular claimants. That has had an effect on real people, on Canadians, those who work in seasonal industries in Canada.

The 1998 EI monitoring and assessment report produced by the Department of Human Resources Development acknowledges that communities with high levels of seasonal employment were most likely to have industries that showed declining benefit levels.

What did the government intend to happen? What was the motive of the government in all of this? What did it hope to accomplish by means of this intensity rule?

It would seem that it hoped workers would move out of seasonal industries and seek employment in industries where they would be able to be employed year round. The reasoning is pretty simple. Since seasonal workers would get less in EI benefits, they would be in a position where they would seek employment that would not be seasonal, that it would have that effect upon them.

Seasonal workers are not doing anything different despite what the government assumed at that point. Unfortunately it did not have that effect on a wide scale. Most seasonal workers, at least during the time of the study that led to the 1998 monitoring report, said that the intensity rule would not affect their work patterns. That is

their plain statement on the matter. When asked about their plans, they said that they had few employment opportunities outside of their existing seasonal jobs and that they would remain with their existing employment and continue to apply for EI despite the intensity rule.

There may be some different ways to deal with this but I do not believe we should go the route of what has been proposed today by my colleague from the NDP. There are arguments for leaving EI as it is if that is the only solution or proposal on the table.

• (1805 )

First, Motion No. 222 would move EI away from pure insurance principles which the Reform Party supports for the employment insurance program. EI is supposed to protect workers against—and I underline it—the risk of “temporary involuntary unemployment”. The member who introduced this motion mentioned that, but I think we need to get the context here and underline that it is for those where there is risk and it is temporary and involuntary.

In the case of seasonal workers we are not talking about risk, will I or will I not. They well know that come that certain time of year, they will be laid off. There is that predictable pattern of unemployment. For this reason EI as an insurance program based on insurance principles is really compromised when workers come back year after year at the same time of year for benefits.

EI no longer functions as an insurance program, but rather it is a wealth distribution program. That is not to say that wealth distribution is not appropriate during a transition phase, but that is perhaps another debate for another day.

My point here is that the EI program as it was originally intended and as I quoted here would not be honouring true insurance principles if we used it to address the problem of seasonal workers.

The report of the Forget commission on UI stated on page 60: “Although it transfers money from the employed to the unemployed and to some degree from the rich to the poor, unemployment insurance is not a very effective income redistribution program”. There are other ways of doing it if that is our intent.

Second, Motion No. 222 would subsidize certain industries but not others. Companies that lay off workers at the same time every year have a huge benefit if those workers do not move away to find work elsewhere but stay in the area, collect EI and then are available to return to work when that work season begins again. This in effect means that such companies are being subsidized by the EI program.

If such companies were forced to pay higher premiums than other companies, then things might be fairer. Those companies might also be motivated to extend work seasons to avoid those higher premiums. That might be administratively difficult, I acknowledge.

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Third is why we should stay as is as opposed to the motion of the member, unless there is some other proposal on the table. We do have an amendment to which we will have to give some thought and consideration. Some seasonal workers have not been as affected as regular workers by the 1995 changes. That needs to be brought to our attention.

Neither of the previous members made note of the fact that some seasonal workers have not been as affected as regular workers by the 1995 changes. In fact, the hours based system has actually helped some seasonal workers who work longer than the average hours per week, which is often the case with seasonal work. They work from sunup until sundown. They work long hours and they get lots of hours in over a short period of time. They are thus able to qualify for benefits in a shorter period of time. On the other hand non-seasonal workers who tend to work normal hours were not helped by the switch to the hours based system as some seasonal workers were.

Fourth, I would maintain the status quo or at least the present system as opposed to the motion under discussion here, because changing the rules for seasonal work might create an incentive for people to enter seasonal industries. We usually hear of the person who already has a seasonal job, but what about the person looking for a first job or looking to make a job switch? They might be more tempted to try to get a seasonal job than a long term employment option if they know that EI will supplement their income. Clearly we want some incentive in place that will make a person prefer the non-seasonal yearlong job. We need to have that in our EI program.

Can we affect seasonal patterns? I think to some extent we can over the course of time. Seasonal patterns themselves have changed over time. During the 1970s, seasonality in employment declined somewhat, primarily in the primary industries mainly due to the decline in the size of the agricultural sector relative to the rest of the economy.

Seasonal variability in unemployment has declined even more. In 1966 the difference between unemployment in the highest and lowest months was 46%. By 1980 the difference had declined to less than 26%.

We might ask how a government would go about affecting work patterns. One excellent proposal is that of experience rating. A fundamental reform which could help us is a proposal by Professor Jack Mintz contained in a taxation on business report. He talked about experience rating which relates to insurance premiums. This is used in the United States in cases where an insurance scheme penalizes those companies which lay people off more than the industry average. This is relevant to our situation today.

• (1810)

In a situation where there are many seasonal employees such as the forestry industry, a pulp and paper outfit which lays off more

than the norm in that particular industry would see its premiums go up. This would create a disincentive to lay off people.

A couple of years ago I was struck by a situation in a Wal-Mart store in Maine. It hired a number of people before Christmas and then laid them off normally, but it hired people to do a variety of other things and kept them on in the long term.

We should pursue these types of possibilities in some of our other seasonal industries. It is doable. We need to use some creative minds in terms of our approach so that we go after experience rating as a possibility for seasonal workers.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I want to commend the hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst for his motion. I think that the issue of seasonal workers is a real concern.

This is the third year of the intensity rule which penalizes seasonal workers, taking away 1% of their benefits every time they receive employment insurance benefits for 20 weeks. This means three years during which, in our ridings, the Liberals have condoned the unfair treatment of these people, who have earned these benefits through their hard work.

The motion, as it stands, is dynamic and interesting. We must change the intensity rule, the number of weeks where benefits can be paid out, the weekly employment insurance benefits and the number of hours to qualify. These four factors deeply influence the financial status of our seasonal workers.

Because of these requirements, young people and women who could have seasonal jobs are leaving some areas because they cannot work the 910 hours required to qualify. This is also true for our seasonal workers.

Most importantly, the law implies that these people have chosen not to work longer. That is what is left of the whole debate initiated by the Prime Minister when he called unemployed workers beer drinkers. Well, we have seen the consequences in the legislation. Today, a couple of weeks before Christmas, there are people who are wondering if they will have enough money to get through the holiday season and to survive until their next job in the spring.

The reason is not that there are fewer jobs than before, and the Liberals should understand that. Right now, we are in a period where the economy is strong but there are seasonal workers who have a job only during the summer. Because of restrictions in the EI program, either they qualify or they do not qualify, but the bottom line is that their annual income is lower than it was before the reform. This is totally unacceptable.

This proposal with regard to seasonal workers did not come only from opposition parties. It did not come only from the people we talked to on this subject. It was supported by the premiers, particularly those affected by the intensity rule that penalizes seasonal workers through a reduction of the number of weeks of benefits and the weekly amount.

Forestry workers who work hard but cannot work all year long find it difficult and unacceptable to see the government treat them as if they were lazy, especially when they do not have enough money to support their family. They then find that they do not have enough dignity to assume their responsibilities as family breadwinners and that is even harder on their self-esteem.

Farm workers live the same situation. In my town of Saint-Denis de Kamouraska and in all other villages, some must try to qualify, but ultimately they still may not receive enough money to support their family. The situation is serious because farms are the backbone of rural areas. It will last until that infamous rule is abolished. The Government of Canada is saying to seasonal workers that they do not deserve the same status as other workers. Yet during all the years when the plan was a valid one, they were allowed to earn an income.

• (1815)

We were happy to have those workers being employed, often for low wages, so that in the industrial urbanized areas, particularly in Ontario, people could earn a good income in the processing industries. However, there were no processing industries in our own areas.

In the meantime, people end up working in agriculture and forestry. There are also those who work in turf pits. I know families around Rivière-du-Loup in which the husband works at the turf pit and the wife works as a secretary. However, her job is also seasonal because the company hires her for only part of the year. They have a combined income of about \$30,000 a year. At the end of the day we end up with the intensity rule, under which for every 20 weeks of EI, benefits are cut back from 55% of earnings to 54%, then to 53% and so on. This means that over three years almost all seasonal workers see their benefit rate reduced to 50%.

The consequences of that are absolutely absurd. In my area, between 1992 and 1998 the federal government invested from year to year approximately \$85 million less in the regional economy. That means that even if industries are very aggressive and manage to get \$2 million or \$2.5 million out of the Canada jobs fund, there is still an \$83 million shortfall in the end. Those who rely on these industries and are seasonal workers do not benefit from that.

Faced with this situation, the federal government must respond quickly. Action is urgently required. The amendment the Liberal

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majority put forward earlier is not enough, in my opinion. It should be much more specific. I recall that at the first meeting of the Committee on Human Resources Development, the year following the 1997 election, there were members of the NDP, the Progressive Conservative Party and the Bloc Québécois who asked that the first issue the committee were to consider be the EI reform.

The observations made today have already been made everywhere in our regions. The Liberal majority told us "This will not be on the agenda; we will not start on this right away."

I do not like the amendment introduced by the Liberals because it could lead to "committee-itis" and we will end up with the same song and dance from the department. The minister has been telling us for some time now "We are going to review the reform. We will assess the new plan after one year and then we will act accordingly."

A new minister is appointed and we get the same answer. We are now into the third year and soon enough it will be five years. Seasonal workers do not eat in the long term, they need to eat every day. They need rules providing them with enough money to feed their family when they are in between two jobs and retain their dignity.

This is what the federal government has failed to understand. I believe the amendment on the table is a sign the Liberal government has come to the realization that if it goes into an election with its employment insurance reform as it is, fewer liberal members will be elected in the maritimes and in Quebec, particularly in the areas concerned, and possibly in others too.

The liberal member said "There are three stakeholders in this: the government, the employers and the employees." But the only thing the government has done so far is pocket the employment insurance fund surplus and pay down a part of the debt with it.

However, those who contributed, the employers and the employees, believe that \$6 out of \$18 billion going every year to fund something else than what it was intended for is highway robbery. It is embezzlement. This is what it looks like to them. This is what is being put directly on the table.

In light of all these issues, it seems to me that the valuable motion introduced by the hon. member should be amended. Therefore, I move:

That the following words be added at the end of the motion: "and that the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development review the situation of these workers at its next sitting".

I am submitting this subamendment to the Chair to ensure that action will be taken in the short term. This amendment is supported by the hon. member for Portneuf and I hope that it will also get the

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support of the House. It would allow us to go beyond idle promises so that after two years all those who kept pushing to have this issue looked at by the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development would finally get some result as early as at the next sitting.

If the committee decides to sit tomorrow morning or the day after, it will not be a problem, we will be there. We will ensure that we can work on this issue.

• (1820)

I am urging the House to support the amendment and the subamendment so that seasonal workers can finally get justice. This is also an opportunity for the Liberal government to eliminate the terrible burden that it put on workers.

Seasonal workers are not lazy people. They want to work but the government has deprived them of the dignity associated with working. We must give it back to them.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the hon. member wish to submit a subamendment?

**Mr. Paul Crête:** Mr. Speaker, I already did, but I can present it again: That the following be added at the end of the motion: “and that the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development review the situation of these workers at its next sitting”.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The Chair has some reservations as to whether the amendment is in order. We will continue debate while the Chair considers the amendment proposed by the hon. member.

**Ms. Angela Vautour (Beauséjour—Petitcodiac, PC):** Mr. Speaker, first of all I would like to thank my colleague from Acadie—Bathurst for giving us the opportunity today to discuss once again the serious problem of seasonal workers.

My Bloc Québécois colleague who just spoke closed his speech with a reference to dignity. It is true that our seasonal workers have been stripped of their dignity. That happened some years ago already.

It happened the day that the Prime Minister of Canada, that same man who came to the riding I represent, then called Beauséjour, seeking votes. When he got back to Ottawa after campaigning in our riding, the first thing he told all the Canadians in the country is that he had been to New Brunswick where he had seen unemployed people bending their elbows in taverns. He said:

[*English*]

“In New Brunswick, seasonal workers are in taverns collecting EI”.

[*Translation*]

You can easily imagine what Canadians think of seasonal workers now. These words came from the mouth of the man who went after these same people to get voted into this House and to now be the Prime Minister. This gives us some idea of what kind of man is leading this country today. The people of New Brunswick could readily find a number of terms to describe him.

However, we have our hands full doing away with this perception and making Canadians realize that seasonal workers are not lazy people. If only hon. members could go to these plants, they would see that men and women there sometimes put in 100 or so hours a week for minimum wage, on their feet from morning to night, sunup to sundown, trying to earn a little money to take home.

• (1825)

The same thing can be seen in all sectors not just in New Brunswick. It is the same in any area of seasonal employment. First of all, it is not the workers who are seasonal, it is the work that is, or their communities, with their high unemployment levels.

Instead of trying to develop our regions, instead of trying to create more jobs, this government has taken away the only program that helped these people. The reform was well thought out by this Liberal government. It focussed on one particular group, the workers in areas of seasonal employment. They are the ones targeted.

[*English*]

This has created a situation that is quite desperate in some areas. We have a discriminatory clause on the intensity rule. We have all talked about it but nobody is doing anything about it. I do not see the Liberal government doing anything about it.

We do not hear enough about the divisor. Most of the MPs in the House probably do not know what the word means because they have never been on EI. Well some of us have collected EI cheques because we have needed to. The divisor is a serious problem because some people receive only \$30 week. Before the last cuts to the program, they were receiving maybe \$200 or \$250 a week. This is what the new EI has done to these people. We have to recognize that in order to fix it.

How about the pilot project we are under? Practically the whole country is under this project and not under the real act because of the small weeks. We are not talking about that either. That has to be permanently correctly.

How about the zones? We could solve maybe 80% of the problems in some areas if we had a minister who would rezone the way it should be done. Let us put the rural communities together

and the urban communities together. In Albert county, Petittcodiac and Salisbury, we have two national parks in one zone and another one in another zone. One group of workers in these parks can qualify with 420 hours while the other group of workers need 669 hours.

Let us talk about the duration for these two communities. In one community, the workers can receive 26 weeks of EI while in the other community the workers receive 15 weeks, but they are all in the same riding. How can this happen? It happened under this government.

We have to talk about the duration problem. We have people going with no incomes for up to 12 to 15 weeks. Can anybody here live with no income for 15 weeks? Why do we think that a person who has seasonal job can? It is unbelievable.

Let us talk about the Canada jobs fund. The Canada jobs fund can be very good if it is used right. The government likes to talk about abuse in the EI system but it forgets to talk about its abuse of the fund. I have to say that I have seen it work very well in my riding if it is done right. All we have to do is get the politicians who make it not right out of the picture. Let us just do it right. Let us let the MP recommend the project.

In one instance I did not recommend a project in my riding because I knew there was something wrong with it. Let us think for a minute what happened to it. Within a year it had folded and we lost the money. I had not recommended that project but the minister went over my head and gave funds to that group knowing it was not going to work. There was no plan. Little political favours like that cost a lot money. Those programs will work if we want them to work.

Since the last round of cuts, my riding alone has lost \$52 million a year. New Brunswick has lost over a billion dollars in four years. That is a lot of money. That will not solve our problem. Our problem is high unemployment. We have to create the jobs. We probably will never create enough jobs for everybody to work year-round. We have to recognize that we have seasonal industries.

• (1830)

**The Deputy Speaker:** I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but the time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired. When this item comes up for debate again the hon. member will have three minutes remaining in the time allotted to her.

The time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business having expired, the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the order paper.

### *Adjournment Debate*

## **ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS**

[English]

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

TRADE

**Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, my question tonight follows on a question I posed on November 19 of this year regarding an agricultural trade issue.

Protectionism in the international trade of agriculture is on the rise. U.S. border state politicians are increasing their rhetoric and are once again starting to rattle their trade sabres, threatening the livelihood of Canadian agricultural producers.

The most recent example of this protectionism is the anti-dumping and countervail petition to the U.S. department of commerce by the Montana producers' group, R-CALF. R-CALF claimed that Canadian cattle were government subsidized and were dumped on the U.S. market. Before the United States International Trade Commission finally ruled in Canada's favour, Canadian cattlemen were forced to pay a 5.63% provisional tariff on their export cattle, open their books to a foreign government agency and spend millions of dollars in legal fees to defend their industry against these groundless claims.

Canadian cattlemen are fair traders but are being left exposed to the threat of multimillion dollar legal battles because of the indifference of the government and its failure to treat agricultural trade as a priority.

The government has had six years to reduce the bilateral trade irritants with our biggest trading partner. The current definition of dumping, which does not consider the cyclical nature of the agriculture industry, trapped Canadian cattlemen when they were forced to sell their cattle below the price of production several years ago. This poorly worded definition does more to hurt Canadian industry than to protect it. A responsible definition should reflect market cycles and take action in cases of predatory pricing and selling below home market prices.

Another aggravation for cattlemen in this case was the failure of the agriculture minister to take decisive action to implement changes recommended by the Canadian cattle industry, changes that would address trade tensions between Canada and the U.S.

Frustrated by the inaction of the federal government in the wake of the R-CALF petition, a group of cattlemen in my riding came together and formed a producer group called the North West Beef

*Adjournment Debate*

Producers. This group raised over \$200,000 to finance meetings with U.S. producers to seek a solution to these repeated trade disputes. It requested an expansion of the north west pilot project, specifically asking for a national exemption on Blue Tongue and recommending a treatment protocol for anaplasmosis, allowing year-round entry to Canada of feeder cattle from the U.S.

However, despite the fact that considerable research has proven that lifting the restrictions will not adversely affect the health of the Canadian herd, and that these proposals do not depend on federal financial assistance for their success, the federal minister of agriculture left cattlemen high and dry, promising only to further explore the issue.

Although the U.S. ITC ruled in Canada's favour, this government is making a mistake if it thinks that the Americans are willing to give up the fight. The government need only look at the \$75,000 donation that the Government of South Dakota made to the R-CALF campaign to see how seriously the northern tier U.S. states view this issue.

How long will the minister of agriculture leave Canadian cattlemen exposed to the kind of trade harassment that we have seen over the last year before he implements the regulatory changes to the north west pilot project requested by industry groups and when will the changes to the definition of dumping that the industry is asking for be implemented?

**Mr. Bob Speller (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for International Trade Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for bringing this matter forward tonight. I would encourage him to come to the foreign affairs committee, which has discussed this issue in the past a number of times. His colleagues on the committee might remind him of the times that we discussed this issue at the foreign affairs committee. It is a very important issue for Canada.

In his intervention the member raised the anti-dumping investigation on live cattle which was recently concluded by the United States. It is important to say that the International Trade Commission ruled that Canada's shipments of live cattle are not injuring the U.S. industry. Therefore, dumping duties will not be assessed. The Government of Canada is very pleased with this decision.

• (1835)

As an export driven economy, Canada is concerned with the use of trade remedies such as anti-dumping by growing numbers of countries. These measures can significantly impair access to foreign markets. In this regard we recognize that there is scope for improvement in the rules which allow considerable discretion by investigating authorities. That is why we are seeking multilateral negotiations to clarify anti-dumping rules.

## NATIONAL DEFENCE

**Mr. Jim Hart (Okanagan—Coquihalla, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, at this time of the year it is very important that we take the opportunity, when it is given, to express our gratitude to the men and women of the Canadian forces who are serving abroad and will not be home with their families.

It was in this context that on December 1 I asked the Minister of National Defence a question pertaining to the replacement of the Canadian forces' Sea King maritime helicopter. I pointed out that the Liberal government's own 1994 defence white paper, which is the official government policy, promised that the Sea King would be replaced prior to the year 2000. The Liberal government's 1994 white paper states:

Canada's maritime forces will be adequately equipped to carry out their new array of tasks. There is an urgent need for robust and capable new shipborne helicopters—. Work will, therefore, begin immediately to identify options and plans to put into service new affordable replacement helicopters by the end of the decade.

That is found at page 46 of the defence white paper.

Note that the 1994 white paper promised to have new maritime helicopters put into service by the end of the decade, not tendered as a contract, but—and again I stress—put into service. That means that our maritime helicopter air crews should be taking delivery of the last few helicopters during the next couple of weeks.

Obviously, given the late date, the Liberal government has broken its promise to Canadians and its commitment to its very own defence white paper of 1994.

In November, during a meeting of the standing committee on national defence, the Minister of National Defence proclaimed that no new maritime helicopter would be in service until the year 2005 at the very earliest.

The Minister of National Defence has broken his own government's stated policy. This broken promise by the Liberal government has very serious consequences for the Canadian forces, and in particular the personnel. Continuing to use the Sea Kings has reduced the operational capabilities of our forces, and it has also placed those air crews at risk.

The Sea Kings are now 35 years old, older than most of the people serving as crew on those crafts. The equipment is technically out of date and requires over 30 hours of maintenance for every one hour of flight. Often, when needed on missions or during military manoeuvres, the Sea Kings are unavailable due to technical difficulties.

In my question on December 1 I said that Canadians continually read about how forces operations have been hampered by the failures of the Sea Kings. It took only one day to find an example.



*Adjournment Debate*

CSIS

On December 2 the news headlines read that a Sea King helicopter experienced engine failure and was forced to make an emergency landing on the water at Dili Harbour in East Timor. This was an operational disaster that put Canadian air service personnel at risk.

Today the Canadian Press carried a story that the Sea Kings are literally disintegrating in the skies, with at least seven significant pieces falling off in mid-flight since July. For example, on July 7 a window popped off a cargo door, landing near a house in York Harbour, Newfoundland. Worse still, on October 12 a bolt popped off a Sea King, forcing an emergency landing at Shearwater.

This is unacceptable. The Liberal policy has been broken. I believe that the government has lost its commitment to the Canadian forces. It has lost capability for the forces and, most tragically, lost lives.

I ask the government, where is the replacement for the Sea King helicopter?

• (1840)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jacques Saada (Parliamentary Secretary to Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, ever since they have been in service, Sea King helicopters have made an outstanding contribution in many areas, and more particularly in surveillance, and search and rescue operations.

They have been deployed throughout the world, during the gulf war, in Somalia, in Haiti, in the Adriatic Sea for our involvement in NATO operations, and also in East Timor.

I think all Canadians should be proud of what the Sea Kings and their crews have accomplished over the years. But, as the minister has said, it is time to replace the Sea Kings.

The minister has confirmed on several occasions in the House that, as far as equipment goes, the new maritime helicopter project is his first priority. We are working on an acquisition strategy.

But this work is taking more time than we had foreseen in the white book, because the government wants to make sure we will have the equipment that meets our needs best.

The government must make sure that the new maritime helicopter will meet the operational needs of the Canadian forces. For a procurement program as important as this one, several departments have to be consulted. The government will make an announcement when everything is ready.

[*English*]

What my colleague emphatically calls broken promises is the dedication of my government to make things right from all points of view. This is more important than politicking.

**Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to bring to the attention of the House yet again an issue that has been before the Canadian public for some time. I am talking about the failure of the solicitor general's department to take control of some of its own internal agencies.

With respect to this issue, the CSIS agent had sensitive documents taken from a car while at a hockey game in Toronto. We know that the head of CSIS has commenced an investigation, but since that time more security breaches have been exposed.

The solicitor general by his acquiescence has been putting in question the good name of the CSIS agents and the RCMP. The problem is obvious. There is no accountability from the top officers at CSIS or the solicitor general and those within his department.

The recent sad chapter involves a CSIS agent at a hockey game with top secret documents pertaining to the plan of the country with respect to internal security. The solicitor general should have said the puck stops here. Obviously that has not happened.

Time and time again we have seen the non-answers, the rhetoric and the tired preprogrammed responses of the solicitor general in the House. He states that he takes national security as a serious matter, that it is a top priority for the government, and that there is a process which has to be followed. Bunk. This is absolute nonsense. If this were the case things would change. They do not change and that is very obvious.

The solicitor general did not inform the head of SIRC, Paule Gauthier. She found out through reading the *Globe and Mail* almost a week after the event occurred. The solicitor general said he was informed of the event by the director, Ward Elcock. We know Mr. Elcock does not have a great deal of respect for this place or certainly for parliamentarians. He has no respect for SIRC and no respect even for the minister, I would suggest.

The director, aided by the minister, has undermined the role of SIRC. It appears at worst that he deliberately covered up the theft of the CSIS plan or at best acquiesced and sat on it. The solicitor general seems oblivious to this. The lights are on but there does not appear to be anybody home. Furthermore, no one has held the head of CSIS, Mr. Elcock, accountable. The CSIS board has had vacancies for years. It was only this summer that the inspector general's role was filled, just prior to this fiasco being uncovered.

The solicitor general said that he did not inform the Prime Minister's Office. Yet the Prime Minister was overseas making comments about it and trying to downplay it as a serious incident and a serious breach of security. If the solicitor general did not inform the Prime Minister, how was the Prime Minister able to

*Adjournment Debate*

make such pointed comments? Who informed him and what faith should we have in a solicitor general who keeps this from the Prime Minister?

The solicitor general took great licence with the word immediately when the theft had occurred three weeks before and had already been reported in the *Globe and Mail* before it was uncovered at all. Why was SIRC not informed immediately?

• (1845)

If the solicitor general is covering up for CSIS, this needs to be exposed. Was he trying to hide the embarrassment of the incident from the Prime Minister and the Canadian people? If everyone is informed and the process is going to work, everyone has to be informed.

The solicitor general obviously does not understand his departments. He does not understand the individuals who are involved and he cannot continue to pass the buck. These are very serious communication breakdowns. We already know that the RCMP and CSIS are not communicating effectively. Obviously the solicitor general is not prepared to step in and see that his departments are co-operating.

The parliamentary secretary will tell us in a few minutes that things are fine. It will be the same broken record response that we will hear from the solicitor general. He will parrot the same line, but we know this is a problem in the country right now. The solicitor general should have at least asked to call the director before him and make him take account for what occurred.

Canadians are very worried, as they should be, about national security. The solicitor general and the government, by their actions, demonstrate that they do not take these matters seriously. They demonstrate that they have no respect for the concerns of parliamentarians and Canadians at large.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jacques Saada (Parliamentary Secretary to Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I find this interesting. The

member opposite is accusing me of always giving him the same answers. What am I supposed to do if he keeps asking me the same questions? Do I have a choice?

Let us be clear. There was a security breach, which I deplore as much as my colleague, but he is not the only one who is concerned with the safety of Canadians.

When a security breach occurs, and it does happen unfortunately because our systems rely on humans who sometimes make mistakes, there is a process in place to deal with that.

My colleague knows full well that this very House established two institutions at the same time as the Canadian Security Intelligence Service: the Inspector General and the Security Intelligence Review Committee, or SIRC. Both are investigating these matters.

Both institutions are totally independent and have unrestricted access to all CSIS documents.

These matters to which my colleague referred are being reviewed by these two institutions. There was absolutely no obligation on the part of the minister to inform SIRC. It is not his duty. SIRC is a review committee.

I somewhat deplore the fact that, as soon as an incident occurs, my colleague opposite always has the same reaction: first he panics, then he questions the value of institutions that were established by this parliament to deal with these matters.

Again, I am sorry to say that if I am asked the same question tomorrow, the day after tomorrow, in three weeks or in a month, I will give the same answer.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6.48 p.m.)





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