



CANADA

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Tuesday, May 2, 2000**

**Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, May 2, 2000

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[Translation]

### 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 five petitions.

\* \* \*

[English]

### PETITIONS

#### TAXATION

**Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is indeed an honour to rise pursuant to Standing Order 36 to present a petition.

I have not counted them, but there must be tens of thousands of signatures here of people who are very concerned about taxes. They have just filed their tax returns and are very concerned about the unfair nature of our tax system.

They are calling on the government to launch a complete overhaul of our tax system based on the Carter commission of quite a few years ago now. They are asking for a fair tax system.

#### NATIONAL HIGHWAY SYSTEM

**Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition I want to present is on another matter. There are fewer petitioners but still quite a number from Kamloops.

They are calling on the federal government to launch a national highway system, recognizing that national transportation infrastructure leads to improved quality of life through greater productivity, trade opportunities, job creation and tourism opportunities.

#### ABORTION STATISTICS

**Mr. Janko Perić (Cambridge, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I have the privilege to present to the House a petition from 100 concerned citizens from my riding of Cambridge.

They wish to draw to the attention of the House that the collection of publications and abortion statistics are vital in order to study various health implications associated with abortion.

The petitioners pray and request that the Parliament of Canada act immediately to request the provision of Canada's annual abortion statistics.

• (1010)

#### BILL C-23

**Mr. John O'Reilly (Haliburton—Victoria—Brock, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I have the pleasure to present a petition that is a little late. The petitioners pray that parliament withdraw Bill C-23, affirm the opposite sex definition of marriage in legislation and ensure that marriage is recognized as a unique institution.

\* \* \*

### QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

**Mr. Derek Lee (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, if Question No. 24 could be made an order for return, the return would be tabled immediately.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 24—**Mr. Garry Breitkreuz:**

Could the government provide a list of the contracts and the value of each of these contracts entered into between the Government of Canada and/or its Agencies and KPMG Peat Marwick Thorne and its affiliates for each of the years from 1992 to 1999?

Return tabled.

[English]

**Mr. Derek Lee:** I ask, Mr. Speaker, that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

*Supply*

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

### SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY—GENETICALLY MODIFIED FOODS

**Ms. Hélène Alarie (Louis-Hébert, BQ)** moved:

That this House urge the government to demonstrate openness with regard to genetically modified organisms, starting by making it mandatory to label genetically modified foods or foods containing genetically modified ingredients, in order to enable Canadians to make informed choices about the foods they eat.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I feel it is important to speak today on the issue of genetically modified organisms. Before I begin my speech, I would like to indicate that I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Jonquière, and throughout the day, all speakers from my party will be splitting time with colleagues.

This is an important day for me because I am constantly concerned about genetically modified organisms and felt it was important for us all to have a day to reflect on GMOs in the House.

Before proceeding, it would be wise to remind hon. members of the definition of GMOs. Genetically modified organisms are living organisms to which a gene that is foreign to them has been added, one from their species or another species. This gene confers upon them new properties they did not initially possess.

Normally these properties serve to improve the role they play, such as reducing the need for herbicides, insecticides, lowering cholesterol content, or raising something else, but it is important to realize that their properties are changed by the addition of this new gene.

There is need for this matter to be examined more thoroughly. The GMOs came on the scene rapidly. Five years ago there were none on the market, while today they are found in a variety of processed foods.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency acknowledges that about 70% of the foods we eat at the present time contain traces, or far greater amounts, of GMOs. They have become just part of our landscape, part of the things we eat, but most of the time we are not aware of their presence.

• (1015)

In all these modified foods, there is never a label to help us identify what we are eating. In North America there are all sorts of information on the food we eat: cholesterol free, contains cholesterol, sugar free, contains additives, and so on, whereas with genetically modified food, no label is required.

Furthermore, while the government talks of transparency, all this landed on our shelves unbeknownst to consumers, without their

being informed. I would say that it is only in the past year that consumers have begun to take a serious interest in this issue. Public concern is justified because it is understandable to be worried about something we are unfamiliar with.

There is also a lack of knowledge on the effects of GMOs. In its speeches, the government is trying to be reassuring. It tells us that there is no effect, no one has died yet. It tells us not to worry. We should trust biotechnology.

I would like to, but people the world over are asking questions, be it the members of the American Academy of Sciences, the 200 scientists with Health Canada or the entire European community. They are saying “Careful, we should prove that there is no effect on human health, the environment or agriculture before we allow these products to circulate”.

Currently 42 have already been accepted in Canada. According to the deputy minister, 500 are on a waiting list ready to be accepted in Canada. This whole situation creates a reasonable doubt about the government’s approval and inspection process for genetically modified organisms and about the middle and long term effects of these products.

Today is kind of an anniversary for me. It has been one year since I began fighting in the House and in committee to have a debate on this issue. After being initially fruitless and misunderstood, these representations are beginning to give results. The support received from consumers and the public, that is the people whom we represent, is a great source of motivation for me. Now this issue is being discussed more openly, and we must continue to talk about it until we achieve a level of transparency and until there is mandatory labelling for transgenic foods.

There have been trends and movements about this issue. Nowadays, if we do not directly support this technological advance, as it is called, we are said to be emotional. That has been the case from the outset. Now, we are labelled as people who do not understand anything about the American new deal, about globalization. We are told that we should be at the forefront regarding this issue, that we should not ask questions relating to ethics, health or regulations, but get on side.

In an article published in today’s edition of *Le Devoir*, I read the following:

Those who do not agree with that view feel crushed and overwhelmed by the progress made and they simply do not know what is at stake. Save for a few exceptions, those who are opposed to GMOs are labelled activists and their legitimate concern is perceived as “fear”.

If there is someone in this House who is not afraid, it is me. However, when I think of my children and grandchildren, I would never forgive myself if some day it was discovered that, because of a lack of knowledge, a lack of experimentation—if we have a

scientific approach on one side, we must take the same approach on the other side, if we are critics—we missed something and created a monster instead of improving the plight of human beings.

It is not a case of being emotional, of being afraid, or of not understanding globalization. This is a very serious issue that has not, and this is unfortunate, been taken seriously enough by the scientific community and by parliamentarians in this House so far.

• (1020)

This is what I am trying to achieve—I asked myself who stood to gain in the end. When one asks oneself this question, the answer is obvious: multinationals first and foremost. There is no doubt about it. I have nothing against multinationals making money but I would also like to see consumers derive some benefit. So far, unfortunately, there is no evidence that consumers benefit in any way.

Because more care is now being taken in responding to criticism, proponents are now talking about starvation in the world. So far not even 1% of budgets has been devoted to research into GMOs in order to improve the lot of the starving in the world. Nothing has been done for developing countries. So much for good intentions. Scientifically speaking, it is probably true, but in real life so-called developing countries have not benefited yet.

Is there any benefit to producers? This is an interesting question and the answers are as diverse as the people providing them. Studies have been done in the United States—in Iowa to be more precise—and there is no useful indication of improvement for producers because the results fluctuate with the particular situation. So far I am not aware of any provincial or federal government statistics that tell us exactly whether productivity has increased, whether there has been a significant decrease in herbicides and pesticides or whether microbial activity in soils has been affected. Plants grow in soils, a living substratum.

If this evidence is not available, I wonder who is benefiting. I know right off who is being harmed, biological producers. I would not want to see consumers, who are our fellow citizens, and who are those most affected, harmed in the long run.

We have all day to debate the motion and I will be pleased to answer members' questions.

[*English*]

**Mr. Reed Elley (Nanaimo—Cowichan, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Bloc Québécois for bringing this motion forward. It is an important motion that not only parliament but all Canadians should address as we discuss this issue.

There are loads of material on this issue. All we have to do is look on the Internet to see there are all kinds of information. Some of it is quite good and some of it we just do not know about. It is good to have a debate to become more informed about GMOs.

### *Supply*

I would like to ask my hon. colleague a question about GMOs and perhaps in her research she has found the answer. Could the hon. member tell the House whether or not in her research she has found any evidence of real harm to humans who have ingested foods containing GMOs? Has the hon. member ever heard that eating a GMO has been fatal to a human?

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Hélène Alarie:** Mr. Speaker, nowhere have I read of people dying from eating GMOs. The issue is a bit different. I think that while, in the short term, we have no problems, we may have them over the long term. Allergies are a growing problem around the world. Genetic recombination can create substances and protein allergens.

• (1025)

Even in the tests done by Health Canada, according to a study by Ms. Clark, a researcher at Guelph University, no serious confirmation study has been done on allergens, even on products in Canada.

It is partly for this reason that we are warning that we should not wait until we are sick or have an incident, we should try to see and prove that nothing happens, that we are sure nothing will happen, because we are dealing with consumers and with human beings. So far, fortunately, there has been no major incident that we are aware of.

[*English*]

**Mr. Dick Proctor (Palliser, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am a member of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food as is the member for Louis-Hébert. There was some discussion earlier this year about the possibility of there being a joint committee or subcommittee of health and agriculture to look at the whole issue of genetically modified foods. I would be interested in asking my learned colleague, and she is indeed very learned on this topic, if she has been able to figure out why in fact that subcommittee of health and agriculture has not come together.

I recognize that the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food is going to be looking at this later this month with a series of meetings. What intrigues me is why the two committees were not able to work out an arrangement.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Hélène Alarie:** Mr. Speaker, being in the opposition, I am, like my colleague, unaware of certain secrets, which are almost state secrets. I do not know why there were no sittings of the health and agriculture committees.

*Supply*

I would like to think that it was because of our tenacity on the agriculture committee, in insisting that we speak of the matter there, that the question of GMOs is on the agenda of the agriculture committee at least.

As for the rest, it remains a total mystery. Some mysteries I cannot solve, even if my dear colleague says I have some knowledge; I would say to him that it is just marginal, and in this I have no inherent knowledge.

[*English*]

**Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I will make it very brief for my hon. friend from Louis-Hébert.

In light of the importance of the debate today and the fact that it is going to take place only during today's parliamentary session and that will be it for the debate, would she and her party be in favour of arranging a special debate on this issue to enable all members of parliament who have a view or an interest in this issue to participate? As she will be well aware, because of the time constraints today, very few MPs will have a chance to participate in this important debate. Would she support setting up a special session so that all MPs could have a chance to participate?

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Hélène Alarie:** Mr. Speaker, any time there is a proposal to discuss GMOs, transparency about them, and their effects, I believe my party and I will be in agreement with such a debate.

I must offer my colleague only partial reassurance. I have another motion before the House on the same subject and the first hour of debate on it will take place on Friday, with two more hours to follow. This is very little for now, but I believe we will be willing to discuss this in the House until the end of the session.

**Ms. Jocelyne Girard-Bujold (Jonquière, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it is very important for me to rise today to speak to the motion by my hon. colleague relating to genetically modified organisms. This is a matter of great concern to me personally, as well as to a large number of the constituents of Jonquière, whom I have the honour to represent.

I would like to thank my colleague, the member for Louis-Hébert, and the Bloc Québécois agriculture and agri-food critic, for having proposed this motion, which is aimed at making it mandatory to label genetically modified foods or foods containing genetically modified ingredients in order to enable Canadians to make informed choices about the foods they eat.

• (1030)

I also wish to congratulate her on her courage and determination. She has kept the heat on this issue for a number of weeks. She has

met with hundreds of individuals and organizations and has appeared in many forums to bring this matter to our attention. I congratulate my colleague on her persistence and success.

As members know, I am greatly interested in environmental issues and this will be the thrust of most of my speech. Let us bear a few facts in mind.

In 1994, negotiations for the adoption of an international protocol on biosafety were launched. Among other things, the purpose of this protocol was to regulate the export and import of GMOs, and to protect the environment from the dissemination of these new organisms.

At the first multilateral meeting on the Cartagena protocol in February 1999, negotiations centred on the initial project, the purpose of which was to establish a procedure for assessing the risks of GMOs and rules for their labelling, and to make companies responsible for the damage caused by their genetically modified products.

Hundreds of countries believed in this vision. Unfortunately, Canada joined forces with five other GMO-exporting countries, including the United States, in opposing the signing of such a protocol. At the time, the Canadian government felt that no trade restrictions should be placed on GMOs.

European countries felt that caution should prevail on this issue. In the absence of scientific certainty as to the potential risks of GMOs, they felt that all necessary measures should be taken in order to avoid the devastating effects of these products on human health.

Once again, Canada turned a deaf ear to this example of responsibly managing a product that could prove dangerous to human health. The final round of negotiations for this biosafety protocol, which I attended, took place in Montreal on January 24 and 25, 2000 and led to numerous confrontations.

Canada and the five other countries concentrated on defending their commercial interests and, once again, in the name of a free market, opposed the adoption of international standards that would limit genetically modified organisms. Yet, these standards merely seek to put in place effective mechanisms to ensure the protection of the public and of the environment.

I cannot help but draw a parallel with the importation of plutonium based MOX fuel. In December, Canada imported samples of that product by air from the United States, even though such a way of doing it is prohibited in the United States, because of the very high risk to health. Now, Canada is about to do the same thing again with samples from Russia.

As far as it is concerned, the risk no longer exists north of the 49th parallel. The Liberal way of managing is unbelievably

irresponsible. Canada is doing the same thing again by wilfully ignoring the laws of a foreign country. A number of countries use a rational approach regarding transgenic foods and Canada should take its cues from them. Incidentally, the labelling of GMOs is now mandatory in the countries that are members of the European Union.

Here, the situation is different, since these foods are not subjected to any scientific experiments other than those used for other foods. What is truly worrisome is that, in order to approve a transgenic product, the federal government relies on studies made by companies and merely reviews them. It does not conduct a systematic second assessment of all the plants and foods that are to be put on the market. While approval of new drugs may take years of in-depth studies, approval of transgenic foods takes only a few weeks. It is ridiculous for the federal government to be telling us that there is no risk with GMOs, when the studies have just been thrown together, and many are too superficial.

Of course, these preliminary studies must not lead to our rejecting GMOs. Perhaps transgenic foods do indeed represent no health risk but, as I have already said, given the lack of scientific certainty because of the paucity of information and scientific expertise on the scope of the potential harmful effects of GMOs, we must err on the side of caution.

There is, moreover, another risk, a potentially serious risk to the environment. This is the transmission of genes in nature, what is termed gene flow.

• (1035)

This is not merely a theoretical possibility, but indeed a certainty that has been proven on a number of occasions. When a plant has escaped into nature, it is extremely difficult to recover it, and it can spread before we become aware of the undesirable effects.

It is a matter of concern, therefore, to see companies doing outdoor testing. This might have disastrous effects. Some of the developing countries have raised this very important point. As hon. members are aware, some of these countries are heavily dependent on an economic development strategy that relies on exports, particularly in the field of agriculture.

Genetically modified seeds could quite conceivably harm their agriculture, with the change in genes, the transmission of the resistance to herbicides of some GMOs in nature could give rise to almost invincible weeds that could invade the genes and replace the natural species, including the rare or more vulnerable species. The development of this resistance could lead to the use of herbicides even more poisonous to the environment, benefiting the companies manufacturing these products, which are often the companies that developed the GMOs in the first place.

### *Supply*

We become aware of the vicious circle we find ourselves in and we know full well the disastrous effects of pesticides. At the moment, the Standing Committee on the Environment is examining the effect of these pesticides and will soon table a report on their effects on human health. We will be forced to use them more often and in greater quantity in order to eliminate invisible weeds whose existence is directly dependant on GMOs.

Developing countries are very familiar with this problem and do not want their fertile land to serve as a testing ground in order to satisfy the scientific advances of more favoured nations such as Canada and the United States. It may be that a handful of companies will exercise unprecedented control over the world seed and pesticide supply market with all that this entails for prices and the safety of food supply and on farmers' lifestyle.

There is something called the terminator technology, which gives rise to plants producing sterile seed. Producers, especially those in developing countries, are challenging this technology, which makes it impossible to sow seed from the preceding crop. It is therefore not surprising that some European producers are challenging this monopoly. For all these reasons, it is important to take appropriate measures in order to regulate the use of transgenic foods.

The Bloc Québécois's motion is a step in the right direction because, by supporting the international protocol on biosafety, Canada could better protect the environment, particularly with respect to the export and import of GMOs.

There is increasing pressure in Canada to follow the European approach. The Canadian Council of Grocery Distributors, which represents food wholesalers and a number of other retailers, feels that there should be a Canadian labelling standard.

When it is known that 30% to 50% of Canadian canola plants are GMOs—twice the number in 1997—consumers are entitled to wonder about the potentially devastating effects of these products.

The government has a moral responsibility to ensure public safety, whatever the cost. It is clear that the federal government is completely ignoring this responsibility. On the contrary, it is shutting its eyes and is in no hurry to provide Canadians and Quebecers with protection against the potentially harmful effects of GMOs.

The health of consumers and the environment must come first. There is no question of sacrificing our health and standing by while fertile land disappears. That is why, on behalf of the inhabitants of the riding of Jonquière, I am asking all members of parliament to support the motion introduced by the member for Louis-Hébert.

I wish to make an amendment to my colleague's motion. I move:

*Supply*

That the motion be amended by adding, in the French version, after the word "denrées" the following: "alimentaires".

• (1040)

**The Deputy Speaker:** The amendment is in order. The debate is now on the amendment.

[*English*]

**Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to my colleague's remarks. There has been a good deal of interest on this matter in Peterborough riding, the matter of the terminator gene, for example. I have received petitions about that technology and grave concern about it. I think it is a concern we share.

I have also had concerns expressed about the approvals process, how one approves foods of this type. In particular, I have had petitions from farmers and others about choice, choice at the level of seed, not just the matter of the terminator seed but being able to have choice between seed which is genetically modified and seed which is not, as well as choice at the food level. By the way, in both those cases it would involve some sort of labelling or designation of whether or not it has been modified.

There is also a great interest in the international protocol which the member mentioned. There is a good deal of pleasure in the fact that the Royal Society has now set up a panel, which at the behest of the federal government will study these matters.

My question for the member has to do with the nature of labelling. Could she give us some advice on how she thinks the labelling should proceed?

For example, should the labelling indicate where there has been a significant change in the nutritional content of the food? Would that be the sort of criterion? Would it be based on some sort of impression of the extent of the genetic modification involved? Would any sort of genetic modification be labelled or would it not? Would all products produced using genetic modification be labelled or only those resulting from recombinant DNA technology, which is where there is substantial change in the genetic makeup of the crop concerned?

These matters are very important. If there is to be labelling it has to express something which is real in the crop concerned. It has to articulate to the consumer, be it a farmer buying seed or one of us buying food, some real indication of what the genetic change involves. Does the member have any comments on how she sees a labelling regime being developed and applied?

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Jocelyne Girard-Bujold:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his interesting question.

There are currently several committees reviewing this issue. They are looking at voluntary labelling. Something good may come

out of their work, and the Bloc Québécois is confident it will, but we must respect the public's wishes. Labelling must be mandatory.

• (1045)

With mandatory labelling, consumers and farmers would be free to choose whether or not to consume genetically modified foods. We must respect the consumer's freedom of choice.

As the hon. member for Louis-Hébert pointed out, we do not want to cause a panic. We want to respect the consumers' choice and the farmers' choice.

Nowadays, people are informed. They are very concerned about their health and the environment. The mandatory labelling of genetically modified foods is part of the changes concerning people's health and the environment.

[*English*]

**Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to stand in the House today to respond to the hon. member's motion concerning the labelling of foods derived from biotechnology.

Canada has an enviable reputation around the world for the safety of our food and the rigour of our food inspection system. We have not had the same situations of food contamination and poisoning that have occurred both in Europe and in other less developed countries. Canadians rightly trust the regulatory system, which has been vigilant in ensuring that our high standards are maintained.

I would like to point out that the safety assessments of conventional products and of products derived from biotechnology are both subject to stringent health and safety requirements under Canada's food safety system. Health Canada maintains responsibility for establishing policy and standards related to the safety of food sold in Canada. Health Canada sets the data requirements for the safety assessments of all foods and undertakes comprehensive pre-market reviews of new foods, including those derived through biotechnology.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency carries out inspection and enforcement activities related to food safety standards set by Health Canada. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency also has the responsibility for the environmental safety assessment of a number of agricultural products derived through biotechnology, including plants and animal feeds. In fact, every new food goes through a rigorous and thorough review process before being allowed on the market.

Health Canada and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency require that new foods go through both laboratory and field testing.



*Supply*

They must then be further tested in controlled, small scale field tests to generate additional data for health and environmental safety assessments.

In terms of labelling, Canadian federal legislation calls for Health Canada to set the requirements for mandatory labelling. Current labelling regulations in Canada require that all food products, including those developed through biotechnology, be labelled where a potential human health or safety issue has been identified or foods have been changed in composition or nutrition. Therefore, based on its safety evaluations of food, Health Canada determines if and when labelling is required.

I would like to give an example. Any food product that has undergone a compositional or nutritional change or that presents a possible safety concern as identified by Health Canada, such as the presence of an allergen like nuts, requires mandatory labelling in Canada under the provisions of the Food and Drugs Act.

The commitment of the Government of Canada is always to safety first; safety for the protection of Canadians, safety for animals and safety for our environment. In Canada we believe in labelling that is credible, labelling that is meaningful and labelling that is enforceable. Canadians expect that their government will consult with them on how they want their foods to be labelled and the government is doing just that. The government is committed to exploring how labelling can best serve the public. As such, we are responding to the public's interest in this area. We have announced and strongly encouraged the establishment of a Canadian standard for the labelling of foods derived through biotechnology.

• (1050)

This standard is now being developed by the Canadian General Standards Board under the sponsorship of the Canadian Council of Grocery Distributors. The standards board is an accredited standards development organization within Public Works and Government Services Canada. Its expertise is recognized throughout Canada and internationally.

A committee composed of representatives and individuals from a broad range of Canadian interests has been established. Under the chair of Dr. Lee Anne Murphy from the Consumers' Association of Canada, the committee has already met for three intensive working sessions since the inception of the committee in November of last year.

The committee has established four working groups to look at areas such as definitions, labels, claims in advertising, and compliance measures. Representatives from consumer groups, producers, distributors, health care professionals and representatives from other levels of government, as well as from the federal level, sit on

the committee. These are regular Canadians on this committee, Mr. Speaker, people like you and I and members of the House.

This committee has already fed information back to other Canadians on the progress it is making as it goes through its deliberations through its website. A completed standard is expected within the next six to twelve months.

By initiating such an open and inclusive process to develop a labelling standard, my hon. colleagues should be aware that Canada is indeed a leader worldwide.

There is no other country in the world that is actively engaging such a broad range of stakeholders on this issue. Other countries have announced their intention to implement mandatory labelling policies, but so far they have not been able to figure out how to effectively do so.

Canada, on the other hand, is fully engaged and speedily developing its own national standard in full consultation with stakeholders, in a way which is open and transparent to all Canadians.

I would also like to point out that the development of this labelling standard is very similar in nature to that of the national standard for organic agriculture. This organic standard was ratified in April 1999 by the Standards Council of Canada and outlines principles for organic agriculture which endorse sound production and management practices to enhance the quality and sustainability of the environment and ensure the ethical treatment of livestock.

This project was managed by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and was funded largely through Industry Canada's standards initiative program.

Another example of the government's leadership is evident in its request to the Royal Society of Canada to appoint an independent expert panel to examine future scientific developments in food biotechnology. This forward thinking body will advise Health Canada, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and Environment Canada on the science capacity the federal government will need to maintain the safety of new food products being developed through biotechnology in the 21st century.

Too often we hear from the other side of the House that the government acts unilaterally, that it imposes its view of what should be done on Canadians without due consultation. The government is adapting a balanced and consultative approach, not only to the labelling of foods derived from biotechnology, but also around a broader set of issues involving consumer choice.

That is why the federal government has created the Canadian Biotechnology Advisory Committee as a key group which will help raise the public's awareness of the regulatory process and provide an ongoing forum for the Canadian public to voice views and opinions.

*Supply*

The development of a comprehensive Canadian standard for the labelling of foods derived from biotechnology allows consumers, health care professionals, other levels of government, processors, distributors and producers all to work together in establishing a single national standard.

It will also ensure that the standard which is developed provides for labels and messages which are understandable and not misleading to Canadian consumers. Procedures and guidelines will also be set up to verify the truthfulness of food labelling, truthfulness in advertising and the truthfulness of claims.

• (1055)

I believe the government is doing the right thing by taking this approach. As consumers, Canadians have the right to clear, concise and accurate information that allows them to make informed choices about the foods they eat.

The government believes that it is important to respond to the public's desire to understand biotechnology and the safety of its products. The government has done a good job in developing widely used materials, such as Canada's Food Guide and the recent *Food Safety and You* brochure which was sent to every Canadian household across the country. We remain committed to addressing the concerns of Canadians and to developing means to provide Canadians with the information they need.

While working quickly on a consensus approach to a national labelling standard, the government is continuing to maintain the stringent requirements of the food safety system in Canada. Around the world Canada is regarded as a leader on this issue. For example, we chair the prestigious Codex Alimentarius committee on food labelling. Over 160 countries are on that committee. We are also leading a subcommittee of Codex that has worked over the past year to draft recommendations for the labelling of foods derived from biotechnology.

Governments, consumers and industry are working together to achieve the approach that is right for Canada and one that will work for all Canadians.

[Translation]

**Ms. Hélène Alarie (Louis-Hébert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, first I want to thank the minister of agriculture for taking part in this debate. I am honored that he did so.

I listened carefully to his speech. It is true that we have an enviable reputation regarding food safety. However, it is also true that the principle of equivalence that we use to approve foods is challenged by a number of scientists.

The minister mentioned another topic, which brings me to ask him a question about the standards for organic or biological

farming that were approved in April 1999, barely a year ago. In the whole issue of GMOs, I believe that organic farming is the most threatened sector. We have a hard time, even this year, finding products with less than 5% GMO content in transgenic seeds, while the international standard for the sale of these products is 1%.

I would like to know if the minister of agriculture has a particular concern for our organic farmers who, after nine years of waiting, finally got specific standards for the sale of their products.

[English]

**Hon. Lyle Vanclief:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member may want to clarify this later, but I believe she referred to some countries of the world, probably meaning those forming the European Union, which have put in place regulations which suggest that any food product that has over 1% of content which comes from a crop that has been genetically modified should be labelled as such.

I pointed out in my speech, and I have done so many times in response to questions from this hon. member and others, that even though these countries have done that, no one has yet found a testing process that can assure it. That is the type of thing that needs to be done.

The government is not opposed to labelling, but it has to be credible, meaningful and enforceable. It is not enforceable. If we are going to be fair to the consumer, all of those criteria have to be met.

The hon. member referred to the difficulty in finding product, and I am not sure what she meant. If she is talking about the availability of seeds and plants to the individual producer, that choice is there. They can make that choice. If they wish to plant products that have been genetically modified for whatever reason, then that opportunity is there for those producers. They will have to make that decision. They are very capable of making decisions on which ones to plant and which ones to grow, and I am sure that they will do so.

• (1100)

**Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I too thank the minister for being here this morning to take part in this debate, and certainly the member of the Bloc Québécois for bringing forward this motion.

Genetically modified organisms and what effect they have on people have been a topic of debate across the country and around the world. We need to have more research and we need to know more about what is going on.

There are many questions I want to pose to the minister this morning about grain transportation, increased fuel costs and increased input costs to farmers, but I will stick to the issue at hand.

*Supply*

As the minister is aware, there have been suggestions that a joint subcommittee of the agriculture committee and health committee be struck to study this issue. If this does happen, I would like him, as the agriculture minister for Canada, to assure the agricultural community that it will be well represented as the witnesses come forward to bring testimony to that subcommittee.

**Hon. Lyle Vanclief:** Mr. Speaker, this is within the jurisdiction of the House leaders. It is my understanding, and I could stand corrected, that the issue of labelling will be before the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food.

As the member mentioned, there was a desire to have a joint committee but it is my understanding that in order to have a joint committee there has to be full agreement of all parties in the House.

I personally think that a better way to discuss this would have been a joint committee of Health Canada, which sets the regulations, and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, which is responsible to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food for doing, enforcing and monitoring the labelling. However, it is my understanding that the Bloc Québécois would not agree to that and therefore there will be one committee, the agriculture committee. The discussion will be around the labelling of food. I do not know whether it will get into a discussion of the role of the Ministry of Health.

As far as safety to humans, the Ministry of Health reviews all food products, including those which are the results of biotechnology. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency reviews those with respect to the safety of animals and to the safety of the environment.

**Mr. Dick Proctor (Palliser, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have a brief question for the minister based on his remark that no other country has developed effective mandatory labelling.

This morning some of us had the opportunity to hear the secretary general of the OECD, a former cabinet minister in the House, Donald Johnston, speak on this subject. He indicated to those in attendance that on April 10 a mandatory labelling process had come into effect in the European Union. He also indicated that one is already in effect in Japan.

There seems to be a discrepancy from what I heard a couple of hours ago and what the minister is saying now. I wonder if he could clarify it from his viewpoint.

**Hon. Lyle Vanclief:** Mr. Speaker, as I said in my comments, there may very well be other jurisdictions in the world that have a system, but to date none of them have been able to make it work. It is one thing to pass laws and to have regulations, but we want to make sure that when we do it in Canada it is one that is enforceable. When that is done in any country of the world, the role of Codex Alimentarius is very important because they set the international standards for the labelling of foods.

Even in Canada, with all the incredible ability we have to produce a diversity of different food products, we import nearly one-third of our food. Food is moved from one part of the world to the other. When any country determines that there must be a mandatory something, and I am not saying it should not, as long as it meets those other criteria, in this case the labelling with regard to GMO or the labelling with regard to the level of protein, fat or carbohydrates, there must be a world standard so that if a product comes into a country, that country is assured that the process in the country of origin is one that is credible, meaningful and enforceable. If this is not done, then it is very meaningless and could be misleading to the consumers. That is the importance of the discussions around Codex Alimentarius. Everybody must know that what is happening in another country is meaningful to them and vice versa. Everybody must know what is expected when they ship or sell a product into another market and be able to demonstrate that there is testing, et cetera, for that product.

• (1105)

At the present time a number of questions need to be answered. The challenge we all have is that if it cannot be tested then how meaningful is it to consumers. If consumers see something, bring it to the authorities, point out what it says on the packaging, ask whether it is right or not and there is no ability to take the product and say it is or no it is not right, then the consumer is no better off. If it is not right, then the consumer may be even more misled than before. We cannot and do not want to go there.

**Mr. Reed Elley (Nanaimo—Cowichan, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I am indeed pleased to participate in today's supply day motion put forward by our Bloc colleagues, that the government be called upon to make it mandatory to label all genetically modified foods, including genetically modified ingredients in foods so the population can make a clear choice as to what they consume.

Genetically modified organisms, or GMOs, are one of the fastest growing issues of concern for Canadians today. This is a truly global issue. However, one of the difficulties vexing Canadians on all sides of this debate is the ability to find bona fide research that confirms or negates different parts of the argument.

On one side of the debate are those who feel that any changes to our food supply are automatically bad. Regardless of the quality of science, good or bad, the result is bad. There are also those who believe and are willing to accept what the scientists say without questioning whether or not the scientific proof comes from a company or someone who has a vested interest.

I believe that prior to any knee-jerk reactions calling for labelling of any sort, we must define what a GMO actually is. Although I am certainly not a scientist, I believe that an appropriate working definition for a genetically modified organism would be

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any plant or animal that has had genetic information inserted into it from a different plant or animal.

One of the greatest difficulties in debating a subject such as GMOs is the incredible rate of change that the scientific field is undergoing. What was unknown yesterday is common knowledge today and passé tomorrow.

The rate of change that we see in genetic engineering is incredible and what we may consider as being unthinkable or unattainable today is surely within the realm of the possible and the reachable tomorrow.

Within this debate, we must also remember that the cross-pollination of plants has led to new hybrids that have assisted Canada a great deal. I am no expert but I do know that new hybrids for wheat and other grains, as well as certain fruits and vegetables, have been cross-pollinated specifically for our northern climate and, consequently, the shorter growing season that we experience.

I am certain that my hon. colleague from Selkirk—Interlake, our agricultural critic for the Canadian Alliance, would be able to add greatly to this particular part of the debate.

The debate is not as simple as whether or not we want to label genetically modified organisms. We must be sure of course of the safety of the product before we even release it to the public. If we accept that a product is safe and viable for the general public, what is the best way to label the product? Should we label those products that are modified or should we label the ones that are free of modification?

• (1110)

One major concern I have is that the debate on genetically modified organisms is being largely led by rhetoric and sometimes scare tactics without the reliance and proof of good, sound, provable science.

When organizations or noted individuals speak out, of course they gain immediate media attention, and certain portions of our society will follow along with their recommendations regardless of the validity and truth behind their statements. People will follow along simply because a certain organization or individual, an individual who they perhaps support, has made that statement. When any notable person or group makes a statement, they need to be able to stand by their comments, not in a micro-version of the words used but from a macro standpoint. Any organization that needlessly elicits concerns without proof is being negligent in its duties not only to its membership but to the general public at large.

We live in an information society and many people willingly accept what information is displayed for them across the banner headlines of their daily newspaper or what they happen to read on Internet sites. Unfortunately many people also read these headlines

without taking the time to critically think about what is being said or reading the full debate.

I believe that such is the case with some of the tactics used in the debate on genetically modified organisms. We have all seen the headlines calling for a complete banning of Frankenfoods. We have all seen the news clips of anonymous people destroying fields of wheat in Europe all because we have been told that it is bad for us.

I do not really know if it is bad for us or not. I am not a scientist. I am not a genetic engineer. What I hope I am is a critical thinker. I do want to know, however, the full story on genetically modified organisms. I think every member in the House wants the same thing. Members should note that I said the whole story not just a selected portion that fits the agenda of any particular group.

I think we would all agree that our food supply is one of the most critical things necessary to sustain life not only here but around the globe. Whether we read today's newspaper or one from five or ten years ago, we can read stories of crops or food supplies devastated by drought or plague, early frost or lack of nutrients. The fallout effect of these things have been devastating. To see the pictures of starving children pulls on my heartstrings, as I am sure it does on everyone else here.

Can genetically modified organisms solve those problems? I frankly doubt it. Can they solve some of the problems? Possibly. Are there risks involved? Most certainly. I believe the bigger questions are: What are those risks, and, are they acceptable to the public at large?

We all take risks every day. Most of us take a risk just getting up in the morning. Stepping off the curb in front of Centre Block carries the risk of a car or a bus running us over. I think I can safely state that the risk of endangering our food supply is something that all of us want to be very cautious about. This brings us back to the question of the need for scientific proof.

We are not unique in our debate on this issue. There are many countries around the world that have entered into the current debate. Many world governments have expressed concerns over GMOs. However, we must note that many of these foods remain on European store shelves around the world.

I am concerned that we have not fully researched the entire issue of genetically modified organisms. As a father and grandfather, I share the concerns over the testing, publicity and safety of genetically engineered products. Canada currently has 42 genetically modified organisms approved for use in Canada. However, the issue of labelling and perceived safety by consumers certainly remains an outstanding issue and one that has to be faced.

On February 23 of this year I introduced a private member's bill, Bill C-434, an act to amend the Department of Health Act (genetically modified food). Through this bill, I have requested that the Standing Committee on Health review and recommend legisla-

tion concerning the testing, approval and labelling of genetically modified foods.

Specifically in that bill I have identified the need to conduct research in order to, first, establish whether the consumption by a human being or an animal of genetically modified foods produces, in the short term or in the long term, dangerous or harmful effects on their health.

• (1115)

The second is to establish whether the cultivation of plants from genetically modified seeds produces in the short term or in the long term dangerous or harmful effects on the environment, insects and other plants.

The third is to make regulations on the labelling of genetically modified foods in order to allow consumers to easily identify that characteristic of the food.

The remainder of my bill sets out steps to take for implementation and examination of ethical problems which may go against certain religious practices. It encourages a public debate on the issue and is intended to set up information programs for the general public to make people aware of the effects of the consumption of genetically modified organisms, including a full parliamentary review process.

Then we come to the rather delicate issue of labelling. If we recognize that genetically modified organisms exist and therefore will continue to exist in one form or another, and if we have a general agreement that individuals want the ability to freely choose what they feed their families, we need to be clear and consistent with our labelling.

I note that one aspect missing from today's motion is the cost factor in the whole equation of labelling. There is no doubt that there would be a cost involved when additional labelling comes about. The Manitoba *Co-operator* reported that the largest portion of the increased costs would arise from the need to segregate GMO crops and non-GMO crops all the way from the field to the consumer's plate.

Although something like this is very attainable, what is the full cost and who will bear it? We do not know that. Will the producer bear the additional costs, considering that he is the one who planted the seed? Will food processors bear the costs since they are the ones who purchase the raw material and sell a finished product? Or, should consumers bear the cost since they are the end users? Certainly labelling has a cost involved and today's motion does not particularly identify what that might be.

Down under in Australia and New Zealand a report by KPMG estimated that the cost of mandatory labelling to the food industry would be \$3 billion in the first year and \$1.5 billion in each

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subsequent year. According to its study this amounts to a 6% tax on all food products.

Also according to the study the true costs of labelling compliance would include such things as verification of the maintenance of an identification system for both GMO and non-GMO food products. It would include checks and audits for each batch of ingredients within a product. It would include testing and record keeping for each batch. It would include analysis on non-compliance and/or non-specified testing or audit results. It would also include the investigation of non-compliance complaints and subsequent prosecution records.

I have not asked my constituents but I am pretty certain that I know the answer if I asked whether or not they would be willing to add 6% to their food bill. A few would say that it would be worth it. A few would not care. However I suspect that the vast majority would be very concerned about adding 6% to their food bill.

Recently a meeting took place in Montreal to debate and determine a protocol regarding genetically modified organisms. I believe it is important to note that the protocol fails to follow the principles supported by the Canadian Alliance of using scientific information to determine if an agricultural or food biotechnology product meets Canadian health and safety requirements.

I also note that, as for most treaties or protocols, parliamentary approval is not required for Canada to ratify this particular protocol. It will not come before parliament. We will not have our say in it. That is fundamentally wrong in our democratic system.

The signing of such agreements should not be left to bureaucrats alone. Rather they should come before parliament for debate and ratification. We are the lawmakers of the land. The courts are not the lawmakers. The United Nations is not the lawmaker. We are the lawmakers and we should be the ones to make the final decision.

Where do we go from here? I believe it is safe to say that there is a great deal of scientific research being done on genetically modified organisms. Is it all valid research? I do not know, but experts are available that can assist members of parliament to better understand the entire issue.

• (1120)

We are sent here as members by our constituents to represent their views, to determine the best policy route for our great nation, and to ensure that all Canadians are well taken care of no matter what the issue. It was with a great deal of enthusiasm that I filed a motion with the Standing Committee on Health that we study the health and safety of genetically modified organisms.

All members of the opposition on the health committee supported the motion, but as usual the Minister of Health dictated through the parliamentary secretary and the chair of committee what would and would not be studied, so the health committee at

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this point in time is not studying GMOs. Yet it seems to me that is exactly where it should be studied, if we are concerned about the safety of our food system, our food supply, and its effect upon the health of Canadians.

To those on the committee this should not be a major surprise, considering that the same committee has also refused to study the larger issue of health care, the number one issue of concern for Canadians today. It steadfastly refuses to study the number one priority of Canadians.

Unfortunately the Liberals have no answers or solutions to the enormous questions and problems concerning health care and GMOs. Therefore there is a lack of desire to seek them out and to be embarrassed by the public response to their non-compliance with the demands of Canadians to study such vital concerns. Unfortunately in the end result all Canadians continue to lose under the Liberal government.

Is mandatory labelling the full and best answer? In order to make clear personal choices some consumers wish to be assured what foods do or do not include genetically modified organisms. Clear and concise labelling is important to these consumers. The Canadian Alliance would cite the volunteer labelling and industry regulated process that organic farmers currently use.

In stark comparison to the motion put forward by the Bloc Québécois today, I would like to read a press release from SPEC, the Society Promoting Environmental Conservation. It indicates:

Lower Lonsdale's trendy Artisan Bake Shoppe is the first retail outlet to display the bright yellow and green sunflower symbol indicating products that are free of genetically modified organisms. SPEC president, David Cadman, and Artisan master baker, Katarina Dittus, launched the new GMO-free label campaign on Saturday, March 18, 2000. SPEC will be inviting restaurants, grocery stores, specialty shops and other food outlets throughout the lower mainland of British Columbia to commit to carrying only GMO-free products.

I believe the lead taken by this north Vancouver bakery is probably a far more appropriate route to follow than mandatory labelling. It seems more akin to the process used by organic farmers.

I agree consumers demand choice. I agree they need to have the resources to enable them to make knowledgeable decisions. To not allow consumers to have access to full and good science restricts them from being able to make those complete and full decisions.

I am led to believe that mandatory labelling of all genetically modified organisms leads to a food supply that is overregulated by bureaucrats and subject to the whims of government. By comparison, voluntary labelling for all products that are free of genetically modified organisms encourages a food supply that is self-regulated, market driven and supports the freedom of choice of consumers.

I would also question the minister of agriculture and his department and wonder aloud what the cost of sending out a food safety booklet to every Canadian would be when the researchers and the minister's blue ribbon panel have not completed their work. How can the government waste money when the job at hand is not yet completed? Has it learned nothing from the HRDC boondoggle? Maybe not.

While I relish the opportunity to debate genetically modified organisms today, I believe that the debate is perhaps not in the proper space. As a House we need to have the experts come before its members and discuss the entire issue and safety of GMOs. That is properly done before the health and agriculture committees. I call again for a joint committee between agriculture and health to discuss this huge issue. We need to have that done. Although we have asked for this opportunity, the government has so far refused to research and publicly debate the issues at the committees that should be studying them.

• (1125)

I thank my hon. colleagues from the Bloc. As much as I agree with the need to bring the particular motion to the House and to have this kind of debate, I would say that we have to keep the debate open in terms of labelling.

The Alliance does not have an issue with safety of these organisms, but we do take issue with the mandatory labelling of all GMO products. We should look at the other side of the coin, the labelling of non-GMO products that could be driven by consumer choice and not by the bureaucracy.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Hélène Alarie (Louis-Hébert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to the remarks of our colleague from Nanaimo—Cowichan with great interest. He addressed an aspect that had not yet been looked at: the cost of mandatory labelling of transgenic foods.

If this is an aspect that is rarely addressed, it is because there is so little information available. I listened to his demonstration. If there is labelling, this will amount to a 6% tax on all food products to cover the costs of monitoring, which is moreover already being done by the agency, according to the information we have currently available, because there are few laboratories.

I would like to ask my colleague whether he has weighted the cost factor against the potential loss of market, for instance in Japan, the European community, Korea, and many other countries requiring mandatory labelling. I think this would lead to a most interesting cost reduction.

[*English*]

**Mr. Reed Elley:** Mr. Speaker, as my hon. colleague and her party have put this matter before the House I know that it opens up

the whole debate. There is no question that we must have it and we must ask ourselves important questions such the one she has raised.

Personally I would not know the answer to the particular question. There are many unanswered questions in this whole area, but I think the issue of cost is one which was not raised in her motion. I am perhaps the first person to raise the particular point in the debate today.

It is not an issue that has had the full investigation it should have. We can only go on what we have before us. There is the example of the Australia-New Zealand experience where they are suggesting that there would be an extra cost to the consumer for the mandatory labelling of these products. We must look at it in terms of what it would do to our markets overseas and weigh that in the balance. We must look at all sides of the issue. The verdict is still out and I am grateful we have the opportunity to debate it in the House today.

**Mr. Dick Proctor (Palliser, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in the debate this morning. I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Kamloops.

The motion before the House today deals with proof of transparency in genetically modified foods and labelling to permit the public a clear choice in this matter. I congratulate the member for Louis-Hebert and her colleagues in the Bloc Quebecois for bringing this interesting debate to the House today.

Some significant witnesses will appear before the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, beginning in a couple of weeks, to look in depth at the issue of labelling. Certainly we will be looking forward to that. I suppose today's debate serves as a preamble to it.

• (1130)

I listened with care to what the minister of agriculture said in his remarks a few minutes ago. To paraphrase it I think he is clearly saying, and we all agree, that the onus is not on the Monsantos, Novardis and DuPonts of the world to prove the safety of foods but it is government that must regulate those. He believes and we all hope he is right when he says that we are well served and that Canadians do have a very high standard and can rest assured that the food they are ingesting is regulated well in advance of its going to the public.

The issue seems in many ways to come down to one of the environment. As has been noted several times already, there has been lots of discussion on this topic.

We know for example of the battle between the giant Monsanto versus a farmer in Saskatchewan, Mr. Schmeiser, about pollution from a GM crop that went to Mr. Schmeiser's field. Today in the Toronto *Star* Thomas Walkom has a column based on a report out of the *New Scientist* about a farmer in Alberta who grew three

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different fields of GM canola, one that was seed resistant to Roundup, another from Cynamid and a third for Liberty. What has happened over the last three years since he first planted those crops is that he now has weeds that are resistant to all three. He is looking at an extensive cocktail solution to try to dispose of the supermutant weeds that have been created in the wake of using these.

A lot of questions are being raised by Canadians. I think there is a growing market concern as a result of that and perhaps even a rebellion by some farmers to the giant chemical and pharmaceutical companies that are busy promoting these products.

Consumer resistance has certainly come to Europe in the wake of the mad cow disease, to the extent that the European Union is prepared to pay out hundreds of millions of dollars a year for importing North American beef into that continent. Because the beef may well have been injected with hormones, they are not going to allow it to come in and they are prepared to pay a significant penalty under the WTO provisions in order to keep that product off the European food shelves.

It is fair to say that consumer resistance is also spreading to Canada and North America. We have seen a significant growth in that in recent years. In recent months giant Canadian companies such as McCain, McDonald's hamburgers and Frito-Lay have indicated they want to ensure that their consumers are not ingesting genetically modified products. Even a company like Monsanto is obviously aware of the problems. It is hiving off its agricultural division because of the spate of bad news and it is changing its name. It is interesting that Novardis, one of the leaders in GM food, now has a baby food is labelled as GM free. Marketers and big business are doing what they always need to do to ensure they have a strong market.

Ninety-five per cent of Canadians say that we should have the right to purchase non-genetically modified food and a corresponding high percentage say that there has to be labelling. We know that in a few very well to do Canadian households there is the opportunity to purchase non-GM foods, but without labelling the vast majority of us would not necessarily know where to go, although we did hear about the flour that a member talked about previously.

What I am trying to say is that the precautionary principle should still prevail in this area. Lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost effective measures. That means it has to be science based and not based on science fiction.

• (1135)

At the New Democratic Party convention last year I was pleased to take part in a resolution that dealt with this topic. The points contained in that resolution which was passed overwhelmingly at the convention were that there be a full scale public discussion initiated on GMO foods; that the labelling process to make

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consumers aware be mandatory; that there be adequate protection for farmers; that liability for genetic pollution shall rest with the huge companies, the Monsantos et cetera; and that for food safety there must be the capacity to evaluate GMO food and to ensure that this evaluation is independent of the food producers and the food producing industry and government food marketing.

Recently the government in its wisdom, or lack thereof, dispensed a booklet that was referred to by the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, "Food Safety and You". This has generated a lot of interest in my constituency. I had a recent letter, an e-mail, from people who are very concerned and unhappy that the government had put out this product. To quote in part from a letter from the Hjertaas family:

As for "labelling," it seems to me that Allergy Associations have been fighting for years to get all ingredients labelled for health reasons and I'm not sure we are there yet. For instance the unlabelled practice of putting corn grits on the bottom of bread has made my son sick more than once!

And why in the world would the Government of Canada use the organic standards developed under the Canadian General Standards Board as a model for the development of labelling for foods derived from biotechnology? Biotechnology has no place in organics as is well illustrated in the new U.S. organic standards.

The writer concludes that the Government of Canada has absolutely no business supporting the corporate agenda.

There was a very recent interesting article by Brian Flemming, a Halifax writer and columnist, in the current issue of *Policy Options Politiques*. He talked about the huge government conflict of interest brewing in Ottawa where genetically modified foods are beginning to trouble both bureaucrats and the Canadian public. He indicated, as I have said, that a majority of Canadians would be less likely to buy GM food if they knew it had been modified. The same Canadians would no doubt also overwhelmingly demand that the country's food regulator be just that, a regulator, and not a promoter of GM foods like canola. He said:

Ethically, the federal government has a duty not to extend its regulatory reach any further into the GM food world without first divesting itself of its current, conflicting roles, of promoter of, or financier for, GM foods.

He ended by saying:

—the following "regulatory commandment" should be posted on the walls of the offices of all ministers and deputy ministers: Thou shalt not simultaneously regulate and promote, regulate and finance, or regulate and insure any industry.

In closing, I think that would be a very good commandment for the government to follow on this lively issue of genetically modified foods.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Hélène Alarie (Louis-Hébert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I have listened with a great deal of interest to what my colleague from

Palliser has had to say, and there are a lot of questions I could ask, because he raised a number of different aspects, but I will restrict myself to one on research.

● (1140)

I would like to know whether he has asked himself questions about the somewhat embarrassing, if not downright incestuous, connections between major companies and those carrying out research. It is true that the government has pulled out, which has forced our researchers, our academics, to look for partners—a term I feel has been worked to death.

Is it possible to maintain independent research, purely scientific research relating to GMOs that responds to the concerns of the consumer, not just those of big business?

[*English*]

**Mr. Dick Proctor:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Louis-Hébert for the question.

This is a developing area for all of us. What I was trying to say in my remarks, and it is reflective of the question and what is going on in the industry, is that the latent concern people have had about this issue has become more significant in recent months and the last few years. There is a recognition that we need to have independent research and an arm's length or longer arm's length relationship between the government and generally speaking the transnationals that are engaged in or funding much of the research in this area.

To that extent the government's announcement to fund more science, scientists and chairs at universities will be helpful. We have gone away from that in recent years in our obsession with eliminating the deficit as quickly as possible and cutting back in so many areas of the public sector. It is to our detriment that we have done that. It seems that at least in some areas we are now in a period of modest growth. This may very well be one of them and that would be welcome news for all.

**Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I too want to indicate our appreciation to the hon. member for Louis-Hébert for bringing this issue before the House today. It is possibly one of the most important topics we will be discussing this year. If we think of the old adage that we are what we eat, the question we are discussing today is what on earth are we eating? We do not know what we are eating. We do not know the impact of the foods we are eating.

Consider the number of people whom we all know who at this time of the year spend a good deal of their waking hours scratching their eyes and sneezing. There are allergies from coast to coast in increasing numbers. On any plane these days half of the passengers are sneezing, wheezing and hacking. It looks like they are all sad and crying. It is an increasing reality.



Then we hear of pesticides all over the world and people dying of this and that. There are pesticides in the snow in the Antarctic and Arctic, dying whales and so on. There are increasing levels of cancer in our society. I suspect there is not a single one of us in the House of Commons who does not have a close associate, friend or family member who has contracted or died from this horrible disease. It is everywhere.

What causes all of this? It is increasing. To say it has nothing to do with what we are talking about today, I do not think anybody would believe that.

This is a very important topic. I want to indicate my appreciation to my colleague from Palliser for enabling me to say a few words about it this morning. I look forward to listening to the debate as it progresses.

A number of elements of the genetically modified food issue are important. As my friend from Palliser indicated, one of them is the issue of the environment. In his comments he referred to a recent study in the prestigious *New Scientist* magazine. Thanks to Thomas Walkom of the *Toronto Star* it was brought to more public attention than those who simply read the *New Scientist*.

The article refers to an Albertan farmer who has recently made history. His genetically modified canola crop has created mutant weeds which are now resistant to not one, not two, but three common herbicides.

• (1145)

Mr. Speaker, you have a quizzical look on your face. You thought, like others, that the reason we used the products which Monsanto has been promoting was to avoid spreading extra pesticides on weeds. They were supposed to take care of all this. Allow me to continue.

One of the main selling points which the *New Scientist* points out regarding genetically altered crops is that they are supposed to require fewer toxic herbicides. Genetically engineered canola, for instance, includes an alien gene which makes the crop resistant to specific, common, broad applications of garden herbicides such as Monsanto's Roundup.

If the farmer sprays his crop with Roundup, the theory goes, everything except the canola will be killed. Otherwise the farmer would have to use a cocktail of more toxic, weed specific herbicides, including the very potent 2,4-D.

This article refers to alien genes. I become a little concerned when I think of alien genes coming into my system, alien genes coming into my body because of what I am eating. The thought that alien genes have invaded my body, and presumably everyone else's, makes me nervous.

### Supply

The backers of genetically modified food and genetically modified crops say that this is a boon to the environment, that it will save the environment and be useful for environmental reasons. Surprise, surprise, the *New Scientist* is now almost like a joke book, because it has said "Wake up and smell the roses. This is not happening".

For example, the *New Scientist* reports that an Alberta farmer began growing genetically modified canola in 1997. He planted one field with seed resistant Roundup from Monsanto, another with Cynamid's Pursuit herbicide, and the third with Liberty. We are all familiar with these from our own gardening. The alien genes in this canola refused to stay still. They migrated to the very weeds they were designed to control.

By 1998 the farmer found that he had weeds resistant to two of the three garden variety herbicides he was using. By 1999 his weeds were resistant to all three.

Now the poor farmer in Alberta has to use 2,4-D to control these new superweeds, these supermutant weeds which his genetically modified crops were supposed to have eliminated.

What is the point of this? This is where we get kind of panicky, because the Ontario government has been flogging this report which shows that insecticide use has dropped in Ontario during the past 15 years. This was to imply that these new Monsanto type of products were being effective.

We now find after more thorough research that this study about the drop in herbicide use took place before the genetically modified food issue came up.

What has happened since the genetically modified crops have been introduced? Herbicides have increased by 50%. Not only are we using these potentially monster type approaches, we are requiring vastly more toxic chemicals to apply to crops as well.

As my friend from Palliser pointed out, Monsanto is a little red faced today. It is saying "We are getting out of this business. We are selling off our agricultural products and we are changing our name as well". If Monsanto is saying that it is clearing out of this field, that is a pretty big name and we should be paying attention.

Anyone who has looked at the biotech stocks in the last little while has seen that they are on the way down because people are concerned. They realize that maybe this has been kind of a snow job which we have all been led to accept.

As my friend from Palliser pointed out, and I am really happy that he did, all sorts of private sector companies are saying "Listen, we are getting concerned about this from a profit point of view". Frito-Lay is saying "We are out of this genetically modified food business". McDonald's, which realizes the value of popular viewpoints, is saying "We are getting out of this". McCain's is saying "We are out of this".

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All around the world people are saying “Wake up. What is going on?”, except for one group of people, the folks sitting on the other side of the House which form the government. They are sending out little brochures to everyone saying “Relax. Everything is okay. We have this under control”, when in fact we have been hearing today that it is not under control.

• (1150)

Is this an absolute Frankenstein system? We do not know the answer to that. Many people say it is not. Some people ignore David Suzuki, but a lot of people pay attention to him. He says that we have to be very careful about this. The point is, we really do not know.

The government has been handing out the document *Food Safety and You*, telling Canadians “Don’t panic. Don’t worry, the Government of Canada will take care of you”. That is probably the first clue to panic. These are the same people who said “Don’t panic. Elect us and we will not sign the North America Free Trade Agreement, and for sure we will get out of the GST business”.

When government members say “Trust us, we are working on your behalf”, we should be aware that these are the same people who promote the WTO, support the IMF, the activities of the World Bank and so on, unquestionably. We should be concerned. That is why having this debate today is helpful. I want to thank my friend and colleague from the Bloc for making this possible. As she has indicated, we will have other opportunities to discuss this subject.

My colleague from Palliser reminded the House, and I am pleased that he did, that not long ago, being normally ahead of a lot of the issues, the New Democratic Party saw this coming. We realized we had to take this more seriously. We introduced a motion at our last federal convention. I do not have enough time to read the entire motion, which was overwhelmingly adopted, but in brief it said “Let us look into this very carefully to ensure that the farmers, the food producers of Canada, are protected and that consumers are protected. Let us look into this issue of labelling foods carefully”.

It seems a little odd to me that we would be reluctant to tell people what is in a food product. Why would we not want to do that? We do it for all sorts of other things. Why would we not tell consumers that a certain food has been genetically modified? What does the government do? I do not want to get into the possibilities because I would be speculating and fearmongering. The point is, we should let the consumer decide. For the consumer to be able to decide they have to know which foods on the food shelves are genetically modified or have come from genetically modified crops.

I want to thank my colleague from Palliser for allowing me to participate in today’s debate and the hon. member for Louis-Hébert for bringing this issue to the floor of the House of Commons.

**Mr. John O’Reilly (Haliburton—Victoria—Brock, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, actually, with respect to the name of my riding, Victoria County has been eliminated under the new restructuring and it is now called the City of the Kawartha Lakes.

I want to thank the member from Louis-Hébert for bringing forward this issue and the questions brought forward by our colleague from Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys.

My question to the member deals with the allergy season and the medications people are required to take. I have allergies and I use a spray every morning. I suffer from watery eyes and usually by the end of the day I lose my voice. Allergies have many different effects on people.

Something that has always concerned me is the labelling showing the country of origin on products. A bottle of orange juice claims to be 100% orange juice, but on further study the label actually says “from concentrate”, which is really pulp. I automatically think of Florida and California. After calling the 1-800 number for consumer information which is listed on some of the products, the one thing I am not told is the country of origin. A lot of the pulp for oranges comes from South America, Malaysia, Singapore or Ceylon, places which use any kind of spray whatsoever. A chemical analysis is almost required when we pick up a bottle of orange juice to know where the pulp originated. As we know, in business, whether it is making orange juice or anything else, it is purchased where it is cheapest.

• (1155)

I wonder if the member would comment on that and suggest how the government could correct that particular problem, which fits into genetically modified foods, which are also going to be very tough to identify unless we have a chemical analysis.

**Mr. Nelson Riis:** Mr. Speaker, I do not think I can answer my colleague’s question in any great depth, but I thank him for flagging another important issue that is related in some respects to today’s discussion. He is absolutely correct that if we are going to know whether we are ingesting safe foodstuffs we need to know their source, origin, what is being applied on those crops and so on. I thank my friend for his interest in this topic and for adding one more element to be addressed.

I will take the opportunity to read through a recent poll, which indicated that 75% of Canadians are very concerned about the safety of GM foods and 95% said that consumers should be able to buy food that is not genetically modified. Another 95% felt that genetically modified foods should be labelled and 56% said they lacked confidence in the government’s ability to protect the health and safety of Canadians when it came to GM foods.

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That goes back to a question that was raised earlier about scientific research being done and the fact that we have seen such significant cutbacks in federal sponsored research programs. A lot of this now falls in the hands of the corporations involved in the products or the research that they finance, which is always somewhat suspect. This points out another issue that today's debate has revealed, which indicates the value of it.

I close by suggesting that we urge the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-food and the Standing Committee on Health to get together to evaluate the issues that are being put on the floor of the House of Commons today. Also, as parliamentarians we should give some thought to having a special debate on this subject before the summer recess, because only a handful of members will be able to participate today. That would give everybody who wishes to participate the opportunity. Perhaps we could have an eight hour debate around this issue to get all of the items on the table.

**Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon—Souris, PC):** Mr. Speaker, the impression I got from the member for Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys was that he was speaking in opposition to GMOs, genetically modified organisms, or foods in general. In fact, the allergy reference obviously indicated that any GMO would cause allergies.

As the hon. member is aware, we have a huge problem with peanuts. There are a number of people in this society who are allergic to peanuts. There is an opportunity, by genetically modifying the peanut, to remove the allergens so that people will not die.

Does the member say that this is an area that we should not be researching, that it would not be a benefit to society, and that, in general, we should not be going forward with GMOs?

**Mr. Nelson Riis:** Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to my friend's intervention. I think what we are all saying today is that we are concerned about genetically modified foods. We want more good scientific based evidence before we proceed with the enthusiasm we are proceeding with today. We want to make sure that the health of Canadians is not put at risk by ingesting these kinds of foods or foods made from these products. That is all we are saying.

I want to tell my friend what is always in the back of my mind when we have these discussions. I remember the debate around irradiated foods. I remember a group of scientists who came before the committee on irradiated foods who said that we should not be concerned because they had done a lot of study on rats and not much happened to rats that ingest vast amounts of irradiated food. They said that the only things that happened were that the female rats often became barren and the male rats lost their testicles. Other than that, nothing else happened. We thought that losing testicles or becoming barren was something that we should be a little

concerned about. For a scientist, this was not an issue of much concern.

• (1200)

I was referring to the mindset of scientists, their terms of reference and the points of view they bring to these discussions. A bit of caution at this point is certainly warranted.

**Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon—Souris, PC):** Mr. Speaker, that is certainly a great segue to move into my opportunity to talk about genetically modified organisms. The previous speaker has already taken fearmongering to a whole new level. Now we will obviously lose our testicles if we eat genetically modified foods. By the way, we have all eaten genetically modified foods every day of our lives for the last number of decades. Members of the House may have to go back and check to see whether or not they have gone through the same process the hon. member just suggested.

First, I will be sharing my time with my colleague from New Brunswick Southwest who will be taking 10 minutes of the time I have to speak. At this time I also thank the member for Louis-Hébert, an excellent member on the agricultural standing committee who speaks with eloquence and passion when dealing with genetically modified foods. She does it not as a fearmongerer but simply as an individual, a member of the House who wishes to put on the floor of the House debate of a very important issue.

As the member previously suggested, each and every one of us recognizes that food safety is the vital component of the debate we are having today. There is absolutely no question about that. Anything we deal with respecting genetically modified foods or biotechnology must deal with the confidence of consumers in food safety not only in Canada but internationally as well. Canada is an exporter of a number of food products. We must have the confidence of the world market in order for us to export those foods. This means that we must have confidence in our food safety.

The Progressive Conservative government in the 1980s identified biotechnology as a key and strategic area of future economic prosperity and promise for Canada. The opportunities with biotechnology and genetically modified organisms are phenomenal. Canada today is a leader in the research and development of biotechnology in GMOs.

The challenge we now face in creating a solid and dynamic biotechnology industry is twofold. First, we must create a climate in which industry sectors can flourish both here and internationally. Second, we must meet the public's concerns about health, the environment and the safety of genetically modified organisms.

Although much of the focus in the media has been on food products derived from biotechnology, there are also pharmaceutical, health and pest control products on the market. With respect to

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food products, biotechnology has the potential too. I would like everyone to pay very close attention because we have an awful lot of benefits in Canada with respect to biotechnology.

First and foremost, it increases the competitiveness of the Canadian agri-food industry by increasing individual competitiveness in exporting high value agri-food products. We in Canada are an export nation. We must export the products we grow in order to prosper as farmers and agri-food producers.

Biotechnology increases the yields needed to compensate for the increase of world population. We will be seen as the bread basket of the world. We will be providing food for the world in the not too distant future.

Biotechnology will allow us to develop more sustainable agricultural practices by reducing the need for chemical and pest control. The hon. member spoke about how this was a fallacy and that more pest control and chemicals were required. That is not the case. It has been proven by science that with genetically modified organisms we can control the use of our pest controls, which is very important for us as consumers. I do not want to have any more chemical and pest control products affecting my food than is absolutely necessary.

Biotechnology enables the environmentally beneficial practice of no till agriculture, which reduces carbon monoxide emissions, a very important factor when dealing with the environment today. We recognize that we have to remove and reduce our CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. One way of doing that is to allow us to develop the type of agricultural production which will reduce it.

• (1205 )

Biotechnology will create new markets by introducing value added products. Value passed on from producer to consumer can be and is being done. It is possible to immunize the population by placing medications in foods known as nutraceuticals or output traits.

For example, it was reported recently that scientists in the U.S. had created a strain of genetically altered rice to combat vitamin A deficiency, the world's leading cause of blindness. I ask the member from Kamloops if it makes sense to be able to use the genetically modified and biotechnology science of today. We would then be able to have a rice, which is consumed by the poor populations of the world, that will reduce vitamin A deficiency. This is a wonderful innovation from biotechnology. We should not stop just because there are those among us who believe that we should go back to the way it was in the 1920s and 1930s and not allow us to develop our foodstuffs.

There are a number of concerns. I have done an 180° turn on the issue. Initially I asked why we would want to have a mandatory labelling policy. Why not? On the food shelves of our stores right now 75% to 80% of products have in some way, shape or form been

modified. Whether it be potatoes, flour products or the canola oil we sometimes use for cooking, whatever we pick up has been modified. Why would we want to mandatorily label 95% of products?

I have done a turnaround because I agree with the member who has just spoken. Our consumers must have the opportunity and ability to choose what it is they are consuming. We as a federal government and as members of the House have put forward the proper information and education. We must allow consumers to make their choice based on proper science, education and information.

Unfortunately another group of individuals has put quite a substantial amount of misinformation out there which does not allow the consumer to make an honest and rational decision. That is what we have to do. That is where the federal government comes into play.

My colleague from Louis-Hébert, a very honourable and effective member on our committee, has put forward a motion which speaks to mandatory labelling. Unfortunately I must tell my hon. colleague that I cannot support her motion. I do however support the principle that we must go forward and listen to the stakeholders who will come to our committee in the near future to discuss their positions with respect to genetically modified organisms and biotechnology. I cannot support this mandatory labelling motion without listening to the arguments that will be put before the committee.

That is not to say that it may not be the only way to go. That is not to say that the member for Louis-Hébert is not bang on. We may well have to mandatorily label. I am perhaps leaning a little more to that side than I was not that many months ago. However I would like to listen to the stakeholders such as the farmers who produce the food and are impacted substantially by any changes we may make in the House regarding what they can and cannot grow effectively or economically. Food processors will be impacted. Some 95% of food products may have to be labelled if there is mandatory labelling. What will that do? It seems to be a waste of energy and time.

What happens with segregation of our food products? We do not have the ability currently to segregate a canola seed that may be genetically modified from one that may not be. How do we segregate? There may be a cost that is substantially more than what consumers are prepared to pay.

The hon. member from Kamloops made some very valid points. Industry is probably its own worst enemy. It has a tendency not to put forward solid, scientifically based information or to have a terribly good reputation when it comes to educating the public. Perhaps we have to move in that direction to make it more achievable for consumers.

*Supply*

• (1210)

We have to deal with a number of issues and we will deal with them over the next number of months, but I say to the member for Louis-Hébert that this issue has to be dealt with sooner rather than later. The hon. member and I, as well as number of other members on that committee, have been pushing for it for a long time. The government seemed to be somewhat reluctant. It is finally coming out of its shell and allowing it to happen at the agriculture committee. We will finally be able to get to the root of some of the major issues.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Hélène Alarie (Louis-Hébert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to the speech by my hon. colleague from Brandon—Souris. I know he is wise, and, if he is better informed, he will perhaps change his mind.

I do not think we can let consumers be treated as unwilling guinea pigs and not know what is in their plate.

What interested me particularly in his speech were his remarks on the biotechnologies, which we all support, if they mean better things for humanity. He spoke of the bread basket of the world, an appropriate expression for people from the west.

In this context, how can we export? We talk of the bread baskets of the world, so we will have to export more than we do now. The canola market is closed in Europe at the moment and will be closed in Japan if we do not make labelling mandatory. There is a world trade problem.

How, can the government want to become an ever expanding exporter and fail to honour the requirements of the countries we export to?

[*English*]

**Mr. Rick Borotsik:** Mr. Speaker, the member for Louis-Hébert recognizes that Canada depends quite a substantial amount on export markets, the globalization we have identified over the last number of years through free trade.

Some of our trade partners have closed their markets with what I consider to be non-tariff barriers, particularly with canola, and that is the European Common Market. It is not so much the genetically modified organisms in my opinion that have closed that market with non-tariff barriers. We recognize that commodity has actually grown in Europe. It is trying to stop us from exporting or importing into its markets a better quality and certainly a cheaper product than what it can produce.

We need a global understanding as to genetically modified organisms. There has to be a global agreement. As a matter of fact, in Montreal recently Canada agreed with other countries of the

world that we would have a labelling component to genetically modified organisms. I am not opposed to that, as the member knows.

I am simply saying that rather than identifying it as mandatory in the motion let us listen to the stakeholders. Ultimately the decision will be made and perhaps it will be made to the satisfaction of the hon. member that it may well have to be a mandatory labelling of genetically modified organisms.

**Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, PC):** Mr. Speaker, this is a truly interesting debate today. It reminds me of the story of two economists locked in a room. After discussions they came out with three different points of view because one disagreed with himself at the end of the day. The more we listen to this debate, the more confusing it gets in a way. We all have our views on the issue which are all worthy of note. Who is right and who is wrong is what we are attempting to determine in terms of genetically altered and modified foods. There are varying degrees of genetically modified foods. As the member mentioned, there are very few of us who will go through a day without having eaten some genetically modified foods.

• (1215)

The race to achieve success within the agricultural community is the one single thing that has driven this. At the end of the day it means a profit for the corporations that get to the starting gate the quickest. We have seen that in the U.S. and certainly in Europe more than in Canada.

After the member from Kamloops spoke, he was questioned by my colleague who used the story of the peanut. He wanted to know if we could genetically modify a peanut to make it less dangerous or not dangerous at all to those people who are allergic to the peanut, which is probably the number one allergic reaction in terms of a food commodity that can be deadly for many. The member is absolutely correct in talking about what could happen if we were able to achieve that by taking the enzyme, which causes the allergic reaction, out of the peanut. That would be an advancement.

I want to point out how complicated this can become and ask where it actually ends. I will mention something that is contrary to the situation that the member pointed out. In 1995 a group of scientists from a company called Pioneer Hi-Bred International Inc. placed genes from a Brazil nut into a soybean. The Brazil nut is frequently seen at Christmastime and is really hard to crack. The objective of placing genes from a Brazil nut into a soybean was to help increase the levels of the amino acids in the soybean which made the beans more nutritious for animal feed. The plan worked but there was an unforeseen demonstration of what can happen in the food chain when just a few molecules of DNA are altered.

Many people are allergic to the Brazil nut. Anyone eating the soybean product could die from an allergic reaction without

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making the connection to the Brazil nut and this gene coming from it. In other words, what might have worked for the peanut did not work for the soybean situation. That just shows how terribly complicated it can become.

In this case science won out because it actually was not taken to market because of the unforeseen consequences of crossing a soybean with a Brazil nut. It might help in the House if we were to cross-pollinate some of the nuts in this place. The message is clear that when we start tampering with science, where does it end. What we are talking about today is what controls can we in a common sense way place on that industry.

Most of what we are doing is for a good cause. We are attempting to increase competitiveness, increase crops and reduce the number of hungry people in the world. Those intentions are all good. If we can develop a crop that is resistant to weeds or cold, or extend the growing season later into the fall, that is good, but there is also a downside. We have heard more than one member today speak about the effects it had on the weed crop. In other words, superweeds have developed in some fields around the crops.

• (1220)

We are now building a supercrop that, in turn, cross-pollinates with weeds which develop into superweeds. We are then back to square one in what we can use to kill the superweed. What happens then? If it is a bug, we must come out with stronger pesticides and herbicides to kill stronger weeds. It is a process that never ends. That is why there has to be control over it and common sense built into the equation before we simply run rampant with these advancements not knowing fully what will be there for us at the end of the day.

A poll was conducted to show what average Canadians were thinking about in this area of genetically altered foods. The *Globe and Mail* of January 15 reported on a survey of 500 people in Canada in late November and early December 1999. The survey found that 67% said that they would be less likely to buy foods they knew contained genetically modified products. A lot of that was through fear-mongering because there has been a great deal of that, as happens in any unknown science. Another 28% said that it would make no difference. Only 4% said they would be more likely to buy genetically altered products and 1% said that they were unsure. The survey states that a sample of 500 is accurate to 4.5 percentage points 19 times out of 20.

The same survey was taken in other countries of the world. For example, 82% of the people surveyed in Germany said that they would be less likely to buy food if it was genetically modified, and so on.

The fear is out there. The agricultural community has to be cognizant of that fear. There can be a downside to it. I am not

disagreeing with any of the members in the House on either side of this issue. It is an important one and it is worthy of debate.

We want safeguards built in that can work. I am not sure that enforcement is the right way to go on this issue. Enforcement would be almost impossible. What we want is some truth in labelling and public education on behalf of the consumer so that they are knowledgeable about what they are eating. At this point, a ban would be very difficult. It would be very tough on the agricultural community. I think a great deal of study has to go into this topic. I am sure that as Canadians we will ensure that happens.

At the end of the day I believe we will be more confused than we were at the start of the day. We will agree on some things and disagree on others but the topic is worthy of debate. We look forward to this as it goes through the various stages in the House.

**Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to my colleague's normal, thoughtful intervention in this debate. I find that I agree with much of what he said.

With his opening remarks about two economists having three viewpoints by the end of the day, the member indicated the complexity of this issue and the need for unbiased, objective research. Does he share the concern that I have, with the cutbacks in federal financial support for pure research, that we have to rely more than ever on corporate sponsored research, either directly or indirectly, and that this in itself will not necessarily hasten the clarification that we and others so desperately seek on this issue?.

I would appreciate his views on how he sees the research, particularly the funding of research in this area, as having somewhat of an impact on its validity.

• (1225)

**Mr. Greg Thompson:** Mr. Speaker, a point we have to stress in the House, and where we are headed in the question and the answer, is the power of some corporations to push their agenda. At some point there has to be someone to call them into check and to examine what they are doing.

Let us take a look at company called Monsanto. The resources, the strength and the research capacity of that company are simply unbelievable. It is a case of whether the tail is wagging the dog when it comes to a company like Monsanto versus the government and public awareness. There is a role and probably a stronger role for the government to do the research that is necessary for the safety of Canadians.

There is much to be considered in that regard. The federal government has to use enough foresight so that we have some confidence going into the future that these foods are safe and that there will not be repercussions down the road for farmers and consumers alike.

*Supply*

The hon. member for Quebec mentioned the impact some of these genetically altered foods have had in the marketplace in terms of our export capacity. It is something for which we have to be careful. I would love to think that the government is wise enough to put more resources into research and, at the end of the day, make it safer for all consumers.

**Mr. Nelson Riis:** Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question involves Monsanto. On a number of occasions the hon. member has indicated the very strong positioning that Monsanto has taken in this discussion and the development of these genetically modified products and genetically modified crops. We recently learned that Monsanto has decided, in its best corporate interest, to sell off its agricultural sector and to change its name. Would the member have some views on why it would have taken this corporate course?

**Mr. Greg Thompson:** Mr. Speaker, part of it has to do with share price. If I am not mistaken, the share price of Monsanto in U.S. dollars was about \$95 a share a year or so ago and it dropped to around \$30 in December. That was in large part simply because of the reaction by the public to some of these so-called Frankenfoods that people envisioned the company was working on. It basically boils down to the company moving too quickly in the marketplace.

Mr. Speaker, do you remember a company called Panasonic whose slogan was "Slightly Ahead of our Time"? In politics we cannot be too far ahead of our time. In business we cannot be too far ahead or obviously too far back, but just slightly ahead of our time.

Monsanto was leap years ahead and pushed too aggressively and was forced to sell because of public backlash on some of the advances it was making. If the member recalls, it was Monsanto that came up with the so-called terminator seed, a seed we would have to buy from Monsanto but a seed that could not reproduce. Someone growing wheat, canola or whatever would be forced to buy that seed from Monsanto year in and year out. The repercussions in some Third World countries would be devastating. They would be held captive by a huge corporate giant. I think public reaction was one of the reasons it was forced to sell. I think the public was right. They had to bring these people into check. We hope governments will continue look out for the interests of their citizens.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Odina Desrochers (Lotbinière, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am extremely pleased to rise today in this debate I would describe as one of the most important ones going on.

This issue has been amply studied. We are debating this very important question today thanks to the work of my colleague from

Louis-Hébert and the members of my party, who worked extra hard to enable us to have a real debate on this issue of the GMOs.

• (1230)

First, I will touch upon two points which, I think, are of interest for farmers. Since the riding of Lotbinière has one of the highest concentrations of farming in Quebec, I want to talk about the consequences of not labelling seeds and agricultural exports in general. Second, I want to talk about organic farming, which was adopted by many farmers in my riding who are very concerned about the ever increasing presence of GMOs.

Let us begin with the international context. On April 12, 2000, the European Union amended its regulations on genetically modified organisms, which were adopted in 1982, to impose mandatory labelling. Japan did the same thing and Korea is about to do likewise. The countries of E.U., Japan and Korea are countries to which Canada and Quebec export on a regular basis.

If those countries begin to wonder whether or not our agricultural exports contain GMOs, our producers could lose millions of dollars. This is why it is so important for Canada to follow the example of these countries and impose mandatory labelling.

There is a lot of talk about GMOs these days. There may be some interesting things with regard to GMOs, but there is also the whole issue of international marketing. Last October, I attended a meeting, the last one before what can now be called the Seattle fiasco, where GMOs were at the forefront of discussions among the various countries present at that meeting, namely countries from South, Central and North America.

It is imperative that the federal government act quickly in this area to reassure farmers and also to show its biggest clients that it is making every effort to see to it that agricultural exports to those countries do not contain any GMOs. Those were my comments regarding the economic side of the issue.

Now, let us look at the side of the issue that is of greater interest to the riding of Lotbinière, namely the future of organic farming. It is a known fact that transgenic seeds are more expensive than traditional seeds. This means that farmers must have an increased yield for that practice to be cost-effective. It seems that the yield of GMOs varies greatly depending on the area and the type of soil, and some studies apparently show that the yield is often equal or even inferior to that of traditional seeds. What is Canada doing to ensure that serious studies on GMOs are done?

With all the cuts to research and development budgets, the only studies that are now available to the Canadian government are studies done by companies that produce GMOs. So how can the government have a serious policy on the future of GMOs? Without long term studies, what will we know about the effects of GMOs on cultivated soils and on the environment around the farms?

*Supply*

The introduction and large scale production of GMOs is a real threat to organic farming. In the riding of Lotbinière, as well as in many others agricultural ridings in Quebec, there are pioneers. People have been fighting for 15 or 20 years. There are more and more who are responding to a trend, to a demand by consumers for organic farming. In this respect, I want to mention someone who is very well known in my region, namely Gérard Dubois, of Plessisville. As a member of the UPA, he introduced these notions of organic farming.

• (1235)

Presently, these people are concerned because we do not know how a field containing transgenic seeds may be affected. What would happen to another field farmed organically?

Genetically modified plants pollinate plants grown in surrounding fields. This is called the gene flow, because genes may be dispersed by wind, insects or animals over a distance of up to 10 kilometres, according to certain evaluations. For producers of organic plants and food products, this represents a real threat of contamination to their fields by neighbouring transgenic crops.

If we do not know that seeds contain GMOs, and a producer happens to plant such seeds, one can imagine what the consequences could be for an organic farmer established a kilometre or two away if the transgenic seeds were to mix with the organic ones.

Organic farmers have made enormous efforts. They have to abide by very strict standards in order to obtain the certification of their crops. Once again, if we ever discovered that there was even the slightest possibility of contamination by genetically modified seeds or some of their by-products, those people would see all their efforts of several years reduced to nothing. They could lose their certification if their neighbours were producing genetically modified plants close to their own fields.

This is a matter of common sense. How can we ask of organic producers that they start a business, put in the efforts and market organic products if the arrival of genetically modified seeds and plants constitutes a permanent threat to organic products? The federal government must act quickly.

At the beginning of my speech, I mentioned the potential threats to the agricultural industry and our exports to countries which have already moved towards mandatory labelling. In a riding such as mine, organic producers also feel threatened by the presence of genetically modified foods.

I could keep talking for a long time on this issue because I am vitally concerned with it. During the last two weeks of recess, I had the opportunity to meet agricultural producers who told me about their concerns.

I am very pleased to support the motion moved by the hon. member for Louis-Hébert. It reads as follows:

That this House urge the government to demonstrate openness with regard to genetically modified organisms, starting by making mandatory to label genetically modified foods or foods containing genetically modified ingredients, in order to enable Canadians to make informed choices about the foods they eat.

We intend to make another effort to inform the population of Lotbinière and make it aware of the issue. On June 3, we will be holding a symposium organized by the Centre agronomique de Sainte-Croix, which is affiliated with Laval University. Experts will be in attendance. Once again, we will bring ourselves to date on this most important issue of GMOs.

• (1240)

**Mr. Gilles-A. Perron (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak on this very popular and trendy matter, and on the motion by my colleague from Louis-Hébert.

My colleague has done a tremendous job on this issue of genetically modified organisms. She is really qualified for this type of work. As we all know, she was the first woman in Quebec to graduate as a professional agrologist. She should be congratulated for her efforts and for her pioneering work at the beginning of her career.

She is very well informed on that subject. She has travelled all over the province, consulting people in every region. She held a town hall meeting in my beautiful riding of Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, which I attended. There were about 50 people in attendance. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Mr. Daniel Goyer, from the UPA, and Mrs. Monique Paquette, from the local agricultural training center. They both helped me to prepare this consultation process.

Amongst the 50 participants, there were farmer-producers, teachers, researchers, officials from the agricultural training center, formerly known as the Agricultural College, and organic farmers.

I have to admit that the discussion was slow to start, but we soon found out that everybody was interested in the matter of genetically modified organisms. All the participants showed concern about that.

The major concerns were coming from the big producers in my riding. They were wondering what would become of the land if they used genetically modified foods or products. They asked if they would be able to plant something other than wheat in two or three years. There is definitely a fear of so-called terminators.

The big producers said they felt compelled by Monsanto and other companies to use modified products, because if they did not, their next-door neighbour or someone over in the next riding would. Production costs vary greatly. With the terminators, there is no more need for pesticides, there is almost no need for spraying and one gets a yield.



*Supply*

Following that consultation and the story published in the local papers, I received hundreds and hundreds of telephone calls at my office. As a matter, the local journalists had done a great job. I tabled a petition in this regard in the House, signed by people who supported the motion by my hon. colleague for Louis-Hébert.

The petitioners asked that people at least be in a position to know what they were eating, to know at least whether the products they use contain GMOs.

• (1245)

The main concerns of the people who attended the meeting held in my riding, as my colleague for Louis-Hébert could confirm, could be summed up with these questions. Why are we genetically modifying plants, foods, organisms? Who benefits from that modification, the companies, the producers or the consumers? What are the benefits and the disadvantages for the producers? What impact do GMOs have on public health and on my own health? What are the issues revolving around this new type of farming and traditional farming?

Speaking of traditional farming, I want to digress to ask a question. Since the government over there is supposedly going to invest so much into research on genetically modified foods, is there still going to be money left for research on traditional farming? That is a question I have.

What are the effects of GMOs on the environment? What are the social consequences of the introduction of GMOs?

The 50 people that got together that evening had so many concerns that our meeting at a sugar shack, which should have lasted about two hours, from 7.30 to 9.30 p.m., as my colleague will recall, was still going on at 10.30 p.m. The discussion ran until 1.30 a.m., and the people of the community, farmers and the people involved in agricultural training, voiced all manner of concerns.

These were not ordinary people. They were people involved hands-on every day, the farmers of my riding, the berry producers, the field crop producers, the cattle farmers. I must also thank the presidents of most of the unions affiliated with the UPA in my region, who were also present and voiced many concerns.

As I was saying, this meeting raised a lot of questions in my mind. I am not necessarily against genetically modified foods. I am not opposed to the project. Before it is introduced widely into the market, however, the research would have to be more focussed and more detailed. I as a citizen would need to have at least some small idea of what the impact on my health might be.

I think that my colleague's motion calls for the minimum as far as the GMO issue is concerned, which is the labelling of the

products on our grocery store shelves according to whether or not they contain genetically modified organisms.

I call upon all my colleagues, regardless of party affiliation, to support the motion by my colleague from Louis-Hébert, because this is, in my opinion, an issue with very considerable repercussions.

• (1250)

Right now, the Europeans are calling for the contents of products to be identified on the labels. Will Quebec and Canadian producers not end up having their products boycotted in five, ten or fifteen years, as was the case with asbestos? We could not sell our products in Europe or even in the U.S. If I am not mistaken, I think that the Americans are in the process of seeing to the identification of genetically modified products.

This is a worrisome question. We politicians, we MPs, will have to consider it and try to be as reasonable as possible. The first step is labelling foods we find everyday on the store shelves.

[*English*]

**Mr. Lynn Myers (Waterloo—Wellington, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise in the House today to speak to this very important issue. I represent a farming riding, at least in part, a significant part I might add. The issue with respect to genetically modified foods is a very important debate that is now taking place across Canada, and certainly in my riding. As a former farmer I have a very keen interest in the particular issue.

At the outset I want to say that Health Canada has a very strong responsibility to Canadians to ensure that all foods are safe. We know that and quite frankly take it for granted. We need to know that food and the food supply, even though it is foods derived from biotechnology, are safe and nutritious for all Canadians.

I want to take this opportunity to remind not only the members of the House but Canadians wherever they live in our great country that Canada in my view, and it is shared by many people, has the best food safety systems in the world. We need to remember that and ensure that we keep it in perspective.

For example, when manufacturers of novel foods are required to notify Health Canada before the sale of their products, this in effect means that Health Canada ensures that a team of Health Canada people reviews and scrutinizes those foods. They include people like toxicologists, molecular biologists, nutritional scientists and chemists to discuss, to look at and to conduct a thorough review as it relates to safety for Canadians.

To this end I remind the House that Health Canada has established under the Food and Drugs Act and regulations a new division that defines the concept of novel food and requires notification prior to the sale or advertising for sale of such products in Canada.

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This permits Health Canada to conduct a thorough safety assessment for each product. That is important. Canadians need to know that and take comfort in that fact.

Novel foods include but are not limited to food products derived from genetically modified organisms. These kinds of regulations as they relate to those foods were published as part II of *The Canada Gazette* on October 27, 1999.

In order to assist developers in collecting the information required to demonstrate the safety of their product, Health Canada has issued the publication entitled "Guidelines for the Safety Assessment of Novel Foods". Health Canada's safety assessment approach for biotechnological derived foods reflect scientific principles developed through international expert consultations carried out by the World Health Organization and the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, as well as the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development.

This is important because it underscores the commitment of the Government of Canada to work with global partners in ensuring that we have the kind of food and food safety that Canadians take for granted. This approach mirrors that of the regulatory agencies of Australia, New Zealand, United States, Japan and other countries, especially those in the European Union.

• (1255)

The approach used to assess the safety of biotechnological derived foods was first described in an OECD publication, "Safety Evaluation of Foods Derived by Modern Biotechnology: Concepts and Principles (1993)". This publication was the report of a group of about 60 experts from 19 OECD member countries who spent more than two years discussing the challenge of how to assess the safety of novel foods including biotechnological derived foods.

The majority of the experts were all nominated by governments. They were regulatory scientists from government agencies and ministries in member countries who have the onerous responsibility of ensuring consumer safety. These people were well versed in the kind of issues at hand and the kind of requirements that needed to be put in place.

I should also remind the House that in 1996 after three years of experience in the safety assessment of various biotechnological derived foods participants at an expert WHO-FAO consultation again supported the approach used to assess the safety of biotechnological derived foods that was first described by the OECD.

As in the case for approval of most products by regulatory agencies around the world, companies or proponents of biotechnological derived foods are required to submit a set of data which must be of sufficient high calibre and meet the criteria specified in the guidelines. This information is reviewed by a team of scientific

evaluators representing expertise in molecular biology, toxicology, chemistry, nutritional services and microbiology.

The scientific validity of study protocols used and the raw data submitted are critically analyzed as indeed they should be in a scientific review. If any part of the information provided is insufficient further studies will be provided by the company.

The safety assessment of technologically derived foods including consideration of the long term effects of such foods in the diet involves, first, how the food crop was developed, including the molecular biological data which characterize the genetic stage and change; second, the composition of the novel food compared to non-modified counterpart foods; third, nutritional information for the novel food prepared and compared to non-modified counterparts; fourth, the potential for new toxins; and, fifth, potential for causing allergic reaction.

One of the tools used in the safety assessment approach for biotechnological derived foods is based on comparing the biotechnological derived food with a conventional non-modified food with a long history of safe use. This is good science and it is appropriate that we in Canada would use it.

This tool is known as substantial equivalence. This does not mean that we approve biotechnological derived foods if they are substantially equivalent to their traditional counterparts. What this approach means is that scientists assess biotechnological derived foods against their traditional counterparts which have long been safely consumed in the human diet.

The comparative approach permits linking the composition of new foods to existing products with a history of safe use to permit predictions on the impacts of new foods in the diet. Differences identified in the comparisons are the focus for further intense scrutiny which will involve traditional, nutritional, toxicological, immunological testing or long term studies as appropriate.

One of the important benefits of applying the concept of substantial equivalence is that it provides flexibility, which is a very useful tool in food safety assessment. The application of the concept allows us to consider that everything that is the same between the biotechnology derived food and conventional food to be safe and to identify any differences intended or unintended which would be the target of the safety evaluation. Again this is important. It underscores the commitment of the government in terms of good science to ensure food safety not only in our system but for others to emulate around the world.

• (1300)

Scientists further focus on the novel trait or component introduced to foods using genetic modification. These novel traits or components are then assessed using the full range of methods which consider the impact of the new trait or component in a

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modified organism, characteristics related to the new trait or component in the final food, nutritional quality, the potential that the new component may be a toxicant or reduce the nutritional integrity of the food product, and its potential allergenicity as well.

Additional research or testing is often required if scientists are not satisfied. That is important to note because it underscores the commitment of the government to ensure that safety is the absolute key in this process. If there is not satisfaction at any stage in the safety assessment process, further measures are taken. Only if all of Health Canada's stringent criteria are met is a novel food allowed access to the Canadian market.

Concerns have been expressed by some advocacy groups that the foods and ingredients derived from biotechnology have not been adequately evaluated in terms of their potential long term impact on health, especially on human health. Health Canada's regulatory system already provides for the requirement of long term studies when they are necessary. It is important to note that Health Canada is taking a very keen lead role in this area knowing that Canadians wherever they live require it, demand it and insist on it, and rightfully so because of the importance of this issue. Health Canada is taking the lead required in this all important area. I will give an example.

If the application of biotechnology to a food resulted in significantly different nutrient combinations or other novel food characteristics not previously encountered in the food supply, long term studies would be required to further demonstrate the safety of the food. If longer term studies are required, the food will not be approved and the company or proponent will be obligated to carry out those studies and report as necessary the findings and results before any further consideration of its submission. Again this underlines the very stringent criteria Health Canada has in place in this very important area.

As the science of biotechnology continues to evolve on a rapid basis, the Government of Canada keeps pace by using the best technology available at the moment and continually reviews the effectiveness of its approach in all these matters. It plays an active role in the international arena, for example at the WHO, FAO, OECD and other places. It shares expertise in developing assessment strategies ensuring that Canada's strategies are as effective as those in other countries. We share our knowledge with others and they share with us to ensure we have the best science, the best data and the best expertise to ensure safety in the food supply for Canadians.

The federal government recognizes it must ensure that it will have the necessary scientific and regulatory capacity in order to adequately regulate the products of biotechnology as a science as it continues to advance and new products are proposed for commercialization. We see that in a non-ending pace. Everywhere we look new technologies are coming forward. We on this side of the House and Health Canada have to ensure that these kinds of protocols are in place to ensure that we have the best and safest food supply.

• (1305 )

To this end, I remind all members of the House that an independent scientific expert panel on the future of food and biotechnology has been established to examine future scientific developments in food biotechnology. This independent expert panel will also advise Health Canada, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and Environment Canada on the science capacity the federal government will require to continue to ensure the safety of new food products being developed through biotechnology in the 21st century. What an important expert panel that is in order to enable the government to ensure all Canadians that the kind of food safety system we have is the best in the world. It reflects the concerns of Canadians to ensure we have the processes in place to do precisely that.

The Government of Canada is absolutely committed to the ongoing process of ensuring that its regulations on genetically modified foods are appropriate for the state of science that exists presently as well as into the future and the types of food and plant products that are being developed through research. As a part of this commitment Health Canada has been engaged in formal consultations since 1993 regarding the assessment and approval of genetically modified foods to strengthen the protection of health and safety for Canadian consumers.

As I said at the outset, I come from a riding that is heavily farmed and which includes a great deal of agriculture and agri-food business. It is important that we look at food safety. Canadians are very interested in this matter. I am interested in it and I know my constituents are. It underscores the fact that Canadians want the best when it comes to food and food safety. That is a rightful thing to ask and it is rightful to ask the government to ensure the safety of the food ingested by us and our families.

I am pleased to report to the House and Canadians in general that Canada has the best food safety system in the world. In co-operation with other member countries around the globe, we work to continually ensure that through partnership and the kinds of efforts made through a number of organizations, bilateral agreements and arrangements, we are able to share expertise, skill, knowledge and science and make sure that we do the right thing when it comes to food safety. Why do we do that? Quite frankly we do it because it is in the interests of all of us as individuals and for Canada as a whole.

I am pleased the government has moved in this area in a manner that is consistent with the values that Canadians hold. I am pleased that Health Canada and other branches of the government are working diligently in a manner consistent with what Canadians want, desire and need in this all important area.

I was pleased to speak to this motion and indicate what we on the government side are doing to ensure that we continue to maintain

*Supply*

good food safety for all Canadians wherever they live in this great country.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Hélène Alarie (Louis-Hébert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to the speech by my colleague from Waterloo—Wellington, and in some respects, I still have concerns on the work of the government.

First off, I have the impression that the government created a lot of committees and panels last year, to some extent in order to gain a little time and to some extent to move forward so that at a given point it will be impossible to stop or go back. Some things are being questioned, and the government is not admitting that. I think, for example, of the principle of equivalence disputed by a number of scientists. I am not a leading scientist, but I look at what is going on and it concerns me.

I wrote to the Canadian food inspection agency a year ago now, asking a simple question about how they approved genetically modified food. I have three boxes of documents. They are petitions I have been sent, it is crazy.

I look at how they approved “New Leaf Y” and “New Leaf Plus” potatoes. In the past two weeks, the push was on to approve these potatoes, because people were asking for them and Monsanto works with the government and was working in this case with potato producers. In my opinion, there is a lack of impartiality.

• (1310)

My question is as follows: given all of this, how can the member for Waterloo—Wellington say we are really safe and are doing the right thing?

[*English*]

**Mr. Lynn Myers:** Mr. Speaker, the reason I can say it is because it is true. The reason it is true is because the Government of Canada has long since gone on record and in fact in deed and in word has ensured that the food safety system is in place in a manner consistent with what Canadians expect, what they need and what they desire.

I want to point out for the hon. member that the government works diligently in this very important area not only with what she mentioned in reference to my speech about equivalents and other scientific ways of measuring safety and ensuring that it is in place consistent with good science, not emotionalism but rather good science, truth and consistency. I am pleased to be part of a government that is able to do that, has done so and will continue to do it. Canadians expect that of their government, they want it and they think that it is important.

I want to go on record to mention what I think is an important point that the people of Canada should know and I challenge the

members opposite, especially the Bloc members to ensure that they mention it at every opportunity. The federal government encouraged the development of standards for the voluntary labelling of new foods. This project was launched by the Canadian Council of Grocery Distributors and the Canadian General Standards Board with the goal of developing consistent codes of practice for labelling to keep Canadians better informed in this all important area. The Bloc members should mention that when they talk about food safety. They should give credit where credit is due and I am sure they will.

I conclude in answer to the hon. member’s question by saying once again that we have the best food safety system in the world. The reason we have it is because Canadians want it, Canadians need it and Canadians deserve it. We as a government will continue to provide it.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Stéphan Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to address this issue, even though I did not really have time to prepare, because I was supposed to speak later. Still, I am pleased to speak from the heart about an issue which, I think, concerns all of us to a high degree.

I dedicate this speech to my brother’s daughter, who should be born today, if she is not already born at this moment. I dedicate my speech to her, because today’s debate concerns food safety, something she will have to live with, as will all of us.

I am also pleased, as the first critic on globalization in the House, to address a topic that leads us directly to the ethical issues to which globalization can give rise.

We are going through a number of revolutions and the case of genetically modified organisms is a telling one. Globalization brings about all sorts of things, and we have had, among other issues, to deal with food safety. We can now say that the Earth can adequately feed nine billion people. Our planet can feed nine billion human beings. Since there are only six to seven billion of us, there is an incredible abundance of food. But the problem, and I think everyone here will agree, is in how that food is distributed.

But even though this is a very interesting and relevant issue, it is not today’s topic. Today’s topic is not about who will eat, but about what we will eat. An increasing number—and this is a global issue—of people all over the world are concerned about what they are eating.

In 50 or 100 years, people might look back at the history of genetically modified organisms and talk about how the international community was concerned, and about GMOs scaring people. That may be true. Genetically modified organisms may be a step in

the right direction for mankind and they may be something extremely positive. But, then again, they might not.

• (1315)

There are perhaps long term consequences for the environment, food safety and human beings. We cannot take chances when these are at stake. The fact of the matter is that, right now, we do not know, and that is what worries me. I am worried less by the positions being taken on both sides of the House than by the lack of knowledge about the long-term consequences of genetically modified organisms.

What I find more interesting—and this will be the thrust of my speech—is that this is a problem like many others, but one that has something in common with other problems we are experiencing right now which are caused by globalization, i.e. it is a globalized issue. I am going to use this expression because, when one talks about globalization, one can talk about the globalization of certain things, good or bad; but when I talk about a globalized problem, I mean that it concerns the whole world to the same extent ultimately. Everyone has the right to know what he is eating.

I am going to look at another aspect that concerns me and I will perhaps digress a bit from the issue of GMOs and take a look at globalized issues. I find it a bit—I will not say strange—but perhaps worrisome that we are still debating these issues nationally. We are facing a world problem that is being debated nationally and I am sure that a number of parliaments in the world right now are raising all these questions—perhaps not today, but they have already addressed them or are in the process of doing so—are engaging in this kind of debate, particularly in Europe, where the issue is very advanced. There have been international meetings where there was discussion about genetically modified organisms.

My question, and I put it to members of the House, is this: What is the role of parliamentarians with respect to issues that are now globalized? When I refer to globalized issues, I also refer to the problems now caused by financial markets, by ecological disasters, by environmental issues, by epidemics, by genetic codes of ethics and all the resulting scientific advances. Who oversees these issues? Should there not be an international authority? Several authorities may already be examining those issues. Who will be responsible for legislating? Who will have to establish a code of ethics on the use of science on humans?

People have been eating genetically modified foods for several years already without even knowing it, and I am sure that many members did not know it either. We have been eating those foods for several years now. Have we been used as guinea pigs? Are my fellow citizens and myself being used as guinea pigs? I am concerned. I believe that the research being done in this area is being conducted by multinationals, large companies which have huge financial resources and the means to call upon the brightest minds and the best researchers to work for these same companies producing genetically modified foods.

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I am concerned about this extraordinary combination of science and financial interests of large companies, because we cannot deny that the first goal of those companies is to make profit and become more efficient for their shareholders. I have no problem with that. I am concerned however about who will establish the rules regarding the use of scientific progress because this has an impact on everyone.

When I listen to proponents of genetically modified organisms, I say “Yes, you may be right”, and when I listen to those who express some concern, I tell them “Yes, perhaps”. The problem is that I would like to be able to do like those multinational companies that call upon the best researchers and the brightest minds in the world to achieve technological breakthroughs.

From a political and democratic point of view, it is not time that we, as parliamentarians, be able to ask the best researchers in the world how GMOs could be used not to increase profits, but in regard to the safety of those organisms for human beings who eat them? I think this is a fundamental issue.

• (1320)

I find this topic of interest because all my reflection focusing on the urgency of discussing certain world issues more thoroughly relates to globalization. I have often said I have nothing against globalization, far from it. I am in favour of globalization if there are rules of ethics for the good of the people. That is what we need at this time.

Does this mean that the direction politics and democracy must take is to make use of parliamentary forums and tools, to make use of debates, in order to find a unanimous response to questions as crucial to food as those relating to GMOs? I believe that this entire issue must lead us to reflect on a new outlook, with an awareness of our limitations as members of national parliaments with regard to setting frameworks and drafting regulations that relate to problems that have now become global in scope.

Of course this can be discussed in the House. Canada can adopt a position and then defend it in the international forum. However, I think that the time has come to work in a different way, to work all together, saying “We have a common problem here, which is genetically modified organisms”. The problem is that we do not know what the long term effects of GMOs will be. The reflection will have to be focused on this with a view to a common solution, one which will some day bring all partners on line, I trust.

Today there has been considerable progress in this area, and everyone knows about GMOs. The process is moving along, more or less, but some work has been slow. Who is responsible? We have a pretty good idea. There is matter for concern, however.

I can see that the future will bring more and more problems and issues with it. It is our duty as parliamentarians to reflect on this. We must quickly start thinking of mechanisms that would better

*Supply*

equip us to respond properly to problems such as the one we face at the present time, so that the public will no longer be used as guinea pigs.

**Ms. Hélène Alarie (Louis-Hébert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to the speech of my young colleague from Lac-Saint-Jean. I know he is greatly interested in globalization.

I also know that groups of opponents regularly stage big demonstrations, in Seattle or Vancouver, or in Montreal, as we saw recently. Their point, and I believe it is not well understood, is they do not want to be regulated by multinationals but they want citizens to be able to express themselves. They talk about health, the environment and biodiversity.

I would like my colleague from Lac-Saint-Jean to tell us if he shares these concerns or if he is aware of this phenomenon. How could we stop it, or support it, if need be?

**Mr. Stéphan Tremblay:** Mr. Speaker, I find this a very relevant question, as it deals with the civil society. It is thanks to the civil society that we are talking about these issues today. It is the civil society that appealed to us, and when I say us, I mean politicians. The hon. member will remember that Biotech Action Montréal appealed to us on these issues. It is the civil society that sounded the alarm by submitting petitions and by suggesting the introduction of bills.

In short, young activists wanted to stir things up on these issues, because they were concerned. The same happened with the multi-lateral investment agreement where, for the first time, we saw a activist movement globalize through the Internet, which led to these issues being raised. We saw this also in Seattle.

In conclusion, I think that, in a democracy, people need to be vigilant. In this case, it is the people who alerted parliamentarians to these issues. So I applaud all the activists and all the people who are interested in these collective issues that are of crucial importance for the future.

• (1325)

All my colleagues in the House certainly agree that we are confronted with so many increasingly complex issues that the civil society should act as a watchdog and alert parliamentarians to these issues before.

It is simply impossible for any member of Parliament to keep track of all problems. If the public is vigilant, issues end up in the political arena. An example of this is Biotech Action Montréal, which took an interest in food security, helped with research, raised concerns, underlined the long term impact of genetically modified foods, and informed the public.

That is exactly what should be done. It is wonderful. In this instance, the voice democracy was heard. I hope there will be more cases like this one. I encourage all citizens to be more vigilant. These issues are fascinating and very interesting, but, most of all, they are crucial for mankind.

**Mrs. Madeleine Dalphond-Guiral (Laval Centre, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to this opposition motion of the Bloc Québécois on the labelling of genetically modified foods, which reads:

That this House urge the government to demonstrate openness with regard to genetically modified organisms, starting by making it mandatory to label genetically modified foods or foods containing genetically modified ingredients, in order to enable Canadians to make informed choices about the foods they eat.

This debate deals essentially with the rights of citizens to get correct information so that they can make an informed choice.

This motion is of great importance considering the impact of all the new biotechnologies and the intensity of the debate surrounding the issue of genetically modified foods. Since the famous Aldous Huxley novel *A Brave New World* was published, the reality of new technologies has gone way beyond fiction.

One of the first stars of these new technologies was named Dolly. It was the first cloned animal. Something that used to be found only in science fiction novels became reality and it rekindled the debate on the relationship between ethics and science.

The same goes for foods containing genetically modified organisms. There is nothing wrong with the idea of modifying organisms such as plants to give them characteristics that they would not naturally have, to make them more resistant to diseases, for example, or more resistant to harsher climates—we know the climate in Quebec and Canada is often difficult for plants. Doing so to increase the productivity of certain varieties can also be considered progress. After all, we must feed the planet, which is faced with such problems as desertification and the decreased productivity of certain soils.

It could also be very beneficial to consumers like you and me. But it still raises several issues. For example, at this time, no one can predict accurately the long term effects of these modifications on the genetic heritage of our planet. Some people do not hesitate to call genetically modified foods frankenfoods. This is not very reassuring.

To illustrate this, I would like to mention a case that drew the attention of a lot of people recently. A Newfoundland researcher succeeded in modifying the growth process of a type of salmon, a species we know is on the verge of extinction. He managed to do that through genetic manipulation.

• (1330)

As seen on TV, the result was striking, the modified salmon was two or three times larger than a natural salmon of the same age. Of course, fishermen might be interested in catching such an extraordinary specimen, but what about when the salmon ends up on one's plate?

It is not inappropriate to call for a public debate, a broad discussion, since genetically modified foods, salmon being only one of them, end up daily on our plates without our really knowing it.

According to existing data, 50% to 60% of the food for sale in Canada or Quebec's food markets, food that we eat contentedly three times a day, sometimes even four, contain genetically modified organisms.

There are beautiful, unblemished tomatoes, perfectly symmetrical potatoes, corn, canola and soybean. This is definitely not a rhetorical debate, but one that concerns all Canadians, because it involves our food supply, our health and the health of our environment.

For that reason, the government must make it mandatory to label GMOs. The right to information exists; Canadians have the right to make choices, informed choices, about the foods they eat. Mandatory labelling does not mean a ban on these products. The object is to let the consumers know what is in the products they are buying.

Current regulations already require that labels on food products list all the ingredients. Have you ever looked at these labels, Mr. Speaker? Of course not, but I am sure you eat nothing but butter. I would suggest though that you take a minute to look at the long list of ingredients in ordinary margarine.

It would be most advisable to clearly identify GMOs, as we already identify other ingredients. Moreover, the fact that the GMO labelling is not mandatory will only make a good number of people suspicious, that is those who are aware of the potential risks this technology poses.

Mandatory labelling is not only for the benefit of consumers, but also for the benefit of producers. It could help to maintain the level of food and agricultural exports from Quebec and Canada. Many countries have already adopted measures to make labelling mandatory.

On April 12, the European Parliament amended its 1992 regulations, making GMO labelling mandatory. The products that contain more than 1% of GMOs will now have to be labelled in order to be offered throughout the European Union territory. We are talking about millions of people.

We can ask ourselves if the products made in Quebec and in Canada will still be allowed onto the European market. Could it be

### *Supply*

that by refusing to make the labelling mandatory, we could be putting our food and agriculture industry at risk?

Amongst the countries who have already adopted these kinds of measure are Japan, Australia, New Zealand and South Korea. These countries are all in the Far East.

At the beginning of my speech, I talked about the ethical aspect of the issue we are debating today. Scientific research has to be governed by an code of ethics to guarantee that these studies are carried out in the best interests of the population and not in the sole and sacrosanct interests of the biotechnological companies.

• (1335)

First of all, there is the whole issue of intellectual property as it relates to living organisms. When a company succeeds, after much research and millions of dollars of investment, in isolating a given gene, at the present time it can then patent that gene. We must ask ourselves whether it is desirable for the genetic heritage of a planet to be privatized, in a way, solely and uniquely to benefit the biggest and most successful of businesses because they have more money to invest.

As well, if these few companies control a sizeable proportion of genetic engineering, one may well wonder also whether other researchers will be able to continue to move ahead in the same field.

Only a few companies control the world market in seeds, insecticides, herbicides and pesticides. I do not need to name names. Everyone knows who they are. This has significant consequences on supply prices and security, and on farmers' lifestyles.

As an illustration of this, there are two types of seed that have been modified to be herbicide resistant, both made by the same company. Farmers are therefore in a way slaves to a certain company. This does not strike us as being in the interests of the general public.

Another example is the so-called terminator technology, which produces plants whose seeds are sterile. This is getting pretty close to Aldous Huxley. Farmers, particularly those in the developing countries, are opposed to this technology, which prevents them from producing seed to sow for their next crop, thus creating dependency on the seed companies, which is both increasing and unavoidable. Strong objections have kept this technology from being put into application.

It is vital, therefore, for the government to act as a prudent administrator by making it mandatory to label genetically modified foods and by establishing measures for detailed testing in order to assess the long term impact of GMOs on human health and on the environment, as well as passing, after consultation, legislation on the safe and ethically responsible use of genetically modified

*Supply*

organisms and on the creation of a structure for informing and educating the public.

[*English*]

**Mr. Lynn Myers (Waterloo—Wellington, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with some interest to the member opposite. I can tell the House that I was born, raised and still live on the family farm. For me and indeed for all Canadians it is very important that we have very stringent criteria when it comes to food safety.

Why do I say that? The answer is clear: Canadians deserve and expect a food safety system that is in place and they expect their government to ensure it is in place in a manner consistent with what Canadians not only need, but require for themselves and their children.

I can tell the House that Canada has the best food safety system in the world. We have gone to great lengths through the years to ensure that we have a system in place that underscores the commitment of the government and our people to get the right quality of food, nutritious food and good high calibre food in keeping with the Canadian way. I think it is important that we emphasize that and that we understand that.

I also want to point out that Canada chairs the Codex Alimentarius committee on food labelling, which is an international body. It underscores the fact that Canada is part and parcel of partnerships throughout the globe when it comes to this all important area. I think Canadians, wherever they live in this great country of ours, need to know the high calibre and the high regard in which Canada is noted.

I also want to point out that our Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food on September 17, 1999 announced the voluntary labelling of foods derived from biotechnology. That was in partnership with the Canadian Council of Grocery Distributors as well as the Canadian General Standards Board. That too underscores the commitment of our government.

• (1340)

I have a question for the hon. member. I want to know if the sovereignists can tell us where the \$37 million in federal money went which was allocated to farm insurance stabilization in Quebec. Why did the Quebec government not include it in its budget for the year 1998-99, as reported by the auditor general of Quebec on March 28? I want to know from the hon. member where the money went that was allocated for farm insurance stabilization. Where is the \$37 million hiding? Where did it go? Why was it not spent in the appropriate place? Why was it not spent? Let us hear the sovereignists answer that.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Madeleine Dalphond-Guiral:** Mr. Speaker, after having praised the quality of Canadian food products, which nobody

denies, I am pleased to tell my hon. colleague, in response to his brilliant speech, that the money he mentions was handed over to the farmers.

I do not see how making labeling mandatory—because the issue, here, is voluntary labeling, and everybody knows what happens with voluntary measures—would undermine the quality and the reputation of food products coming from Canada.

One must have a very narrow vision to think that our reputation would be tarnished if we adapted to a new reality. My hon. colleague should be proud that there are in this parliament sovereignist members who want to have a debate on something that is fundamental for everybody, whether one is a sovereignist or a federalist. I would not want my hon. colleague, who is so brilliant, to lose some of his smarts after eating too much genetically modified food.

[*English*]

**Mr. Steve Mahoney (Mississauga West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I was interested in the motion put forward by our colleagues in the Bloc. On the surface, when we first read it, it seemed to have merit. Why would we object to labelling on these foods so that the Canadian people can be sure that what they are getting when they go to the grocery store is safe and has passed all the appropriate tests? Who would object to that? It is an interesting concept.

When we look at what has happened in the area of GMOs, genetically modified foods, on the surface for the Canadian public it is a little frightening. We hear of huge cucumbers. They tried growing them in Newfoundland. Actually, they were sprung cucumbers. They sprung a leak and never got off the ground. They tried doing it many years ago. This is not new. This is rather old stuff. It did not work. The market was not there. People looked at these things and said “My God, what are they?” They did not feel comfortable with them. Even though genetically they had been altered, they were safe and there was no question of consumption or safety issues involved. However, it did not fly in the marketplace.

What is the issue around modifying food genetically and why would we be concerned about telling people on a label exactly what it is they are getting?

Unlike my colleague, I was not born on a farm, have not lived on a farm and do not live on a farm at the moment, but, as you can tell, Mr. Speaker, I enjoy food, as we all do.

• (1345)

On a serious note, if they are improving the crop, if they are improving the yield, if they are improving the quality of the product, is this not something that we should perhaps investigate to determine whether or not it is safe? I think we should.



Through motions like the one before us today and debates by some members in this place we create a sense of fear that we should not eat something because it will ruin our liver or whatever. In any event, we understand that it is creating an atmosphere of fear. The purpose of the motion is not to say that genetically modified foods are safe. It is to somehow try to paint the government into a position of being embarrassed because it does not want to share the information with people. That is not true. That is one of the fundamental flaws of a motion like this one.

Members opposite know that Canada leads the world in food safety. People come from all over the world to visit Health Canada and our other regulatory bodies so they can see what procedures we have in place to determine whether or not food is safe.

On one hand I say to Bloc members that I would like to think the intent of what they want to do is good. We want ensure the food that goes on our tables for our children is safe every day. On the other hand, I wonder if there is not a hidden agenda, particularly when funds, such as the \$37 million my hon. colleague mentioned, are transferred to the provincial government only to disappear somehow magically.

They may show up as Premier Bouchard, the new reborn Mike Harris of the province of Quebec, finds a way to suddenly become a revolutionary and bring forth budgetary cuts and tax cuts. Maybe the money that was given to Quebec for the specific purpose of dealing with food safety will show up in some mysterious way in a tax cut. It would not surprise me. We have seen it before.

We have seen what Mr. Harris has done in that regard by simply borrowing money, increasing the total debt of the province of Ontario by \$21 billion while somehow trumpeting the fact that he is giving a tax break. We all know that he is giving a tax break to his rich friends and not helping the people who need help. I digress somewhat from the issue but it will probably occur from time to time.

I have not had the opportunity in this place of listening to the position of the Canadian Alliance Party. It occurred to me that this would be a perfect motion for that party to debate because what we are seeing is a genetically modified political party. It is trying to turn itself inside out.

We all know that when we genetically modify a lemon we get a lemon. It might be bigger. It might be more yellow. It might be sweeter, but we still get a lemon. When a political party like the Reform Party is genetically modified we get a lemon again. I do not think there is any question about it. I have not heard its position. A little bird told me that it will support the government on this issue. Every time that happens I say to myself that maybe we are wrong, maybe we should revisit it. I heard someone else say that it would not support the government on this issue. Frankly that party has been all over the map.

### *Supply*

I want to share a couple of quotes. I took a look at the new book of the genetically modified political party and I tried to see if there were any differences. It is pretty much the same old gang that cannot shoot straight. I do not know why this gentleman constantly gets quoted, but the member for Yorkton—Melville said in a local paper about his party that the principles and policies of Reform are in there.

• (1350)

My dear friend, the member for Wild Rose, said in a newspaper in his riding that he would always be a Reformer. He had his hat and boots on. He said that he would always be a Reformer and that this new party was based on Reform Party principles and platforms.

Where will that party go with genetically modified food? Will it change its position? We have seen more flip-flops on this issue, but it is still sticking by the old principles, and I know it is an oxymoron, of the former Reform Party.

The member for Lakeland said that they would stand for the same things that they were elected on. Will that be the case for GMOs? Will that mean they will line up and vote with the Bloc on this issue? Will they line up and vote here? It is truly a mystery. We can watch the process unfold. We can watch the fact that many members are busy working on various campaigns and trying to bring in members of the Conservative Party of Ontario that do not want to come. It is an absolutely amazing sight.

**An hon. member:** It is a mess.

**Mr. Steve Mahoney:** It is a mess in a political process.

**An hon. member:** The member is getting worried.

**Mr. Steve Mahoney:** I am not worried. What I am really curious about is what this group will do in relation to the particular motion.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Antoine Dubé:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I have been listening for some time now to what the hon. member has to say. I am usually very tolerant. On a matter of such importance, in a very serious debate on genetically modified organisms, how can we, in this House, let the hon. member go off topic and get into purely partisan issues?

Mr. Speaker, I ask you to call the hon. member to order.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I listened carefully to the comments made by the hon. member for Mississauga West. I heard him say the words genetically modified in his speech. That is why I did not interrupt him. While he is talking about a genetically modified political party, he is not too far off topic and, hopefully, he will soon get back to the motion before the House.

*S. O. 31**[English]*

**Mr. Steve Mahoney:** Mr. Speaker, I think the member should show a little patience because the point of what I am attempting to put across is simply that there are five parties in this place. Actually we are not sure how many parties there are any more. We know the position of the Bloc. I am trying to determine what will be the position of the official opposition or in fact whomever it is.

If the member wants me to be a little more serious about the issue, as he said, why would the Bloc put forth a motion to force mandatory regulation, to force the machinery of government into an industry that already has the safest testing methods in the world? I made that point earlier and I was being quite serious about it.

Is the Bloc doing this because it is concerned about the safety and quality of food or because it is one of those bugbears? This is one of those issues with which we can whip people into a frenzy: that if it is genetically modified it will cause an illness, will cause cancer, will lead to blindness or will do who knows what. We can fearmonger with any issue we want.

The member knows that the government led the way. We have been working with consumer groups. We have been working with agricultural groups. Health Canada continues to monitor the safety of food. If there were any doubt in that regard, perhaps the suggestion would make some sense.

We also chair an international body that develops food safety standards called the Codex Alimentarius Committee on Food Labelling. We are doing work in this area. If the member wants to say that somehow we should eliminate this science, I would question that.

• (1355)

We are looking at the fact that in 2000 and the years to come there will be ways of increasing the productivity of agricultural food producers in this country and around the world. Lord knows, we have a serious problem in many parts of the world where this would be a major asset, perhaps allowing Canada to extend more of the already very generous foreign help that we offer throughout the world. In areas where there is famine and terrible tragedies, why should we not look at this? Instead of focusing on what may be politically exciting, why not focus on how we can improve science in this area?

I give the example of health products. We all know that there was quite a controversy. I recall going with the Minister of Health into an area of downtown Toronto where health products were being sold, all these different products that are for sale in drug stores now. Many of us take them on a regular basis in the belief that they are

doing something for our systems. They are not based on prescription drugs but rather on natural products coming from the earth.

I believe they have an impact. I have no scientific proof of that. I am not a scientist or a doctor. I am not trained medically to make that decision, but I believe that they improve diet and health. Hopefully they will keep people out of hospital and out of the medical system.

The big fear about them and the reason there was a big question about whether or not they should be required to be regulated and licensed in the same way, prescribed by a doctor, kept behind the counter and away from the public, was some imaginary safety problem. The research was done by Health Canada. Our Minister of Health went out to that community and determined that they were safe products.

We have to ensure that the Canadian public has the confidence that the investigatory and regulatory bodies of this government and provincial governments where appropriate have done their homework. Because of that we have to know the various positions of those who would purport or wish to govern in any particular legislature or parliament. That is why I raise the issue of the flip-flops and concerns about the Canadian Alliance.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member has five minutes remaining and I am sure he will fill them well.

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

*[English]*

### CANADIAN ETHNOCULTURAL COUNCIL

**Mr. Mac Harb (Ottawa Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Ethnocultural Council represents a cross-section of the country and unites people under a common set of values and objectives to eliminate racism, to enhance Canada's cultural heritage and to remove barriers that prevent full and equal participation in society.

I therefore welcome the federal government's recent announcement supporting a multicultural information network. The project will improve communication between Canada's diverse ethnocultural communities and provide information on a variety of services, including specialized health care providers, religious organizations, ethnic media and publishers.

I am confident this project will go a long way toward enhancing multiculturalism in Canada and creating a better life for all.

**BOYD ANDERSON**

**Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I take this opportunity to introduce to the House a great Canadian. In 1911 Boyd Anderson's parents moved to a vast, open range land near what is now Fir Mountain, Saskatchewan. There was no school, no town and no railway.

Boyd grew up to become a true professional cowboy and rancher. In his youth, Boyd and his brothers eked out a living during the depression by moving from ranch to ranch breaking broncos for riding. Boyd enlisted in World War II with the Canadian paratroopers. He was wounded in France and taken prisoner by the German army.

• (1400)

Boyd is known today as a rancher, a writer and a local government councillor. He was president of the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities. He served with the Saskatchewan Stock Growers and the Canadian Cattlemen's Association.

On February 9 Boyd Anderson was installed as a member of the Order of Canada. Canada's highest honour goes to this fine gentleman who has made a great difference to his community, to his province and to this country. He is a true Canadian who I am proud to call my friend.

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**MIDDLE EAST**

**Mr. Sarkis Assadourian (Brampton Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have recently returned from visiting the Middle East in the company of the Prime Minister and fellow members of parliament with ties to the region.

I was outraged with the unduly negative coverage of the trip by some members of the Canadian media, a viewpoint, by the way, which was not shared by the media in the Middle East.

In Syria for example, reporters had suggested we would be left waiting in an anteroom. The reality was that our delegation was greeted at the airport by no less than eight ministers as well as the prime minister of Syria.

Our groundbreaking trip included visits to the Israel-Palestinian Authority, Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, and Saudi Arabia. The visit was organized by the Canadian government to continue to expand relations with the Middle East and to increase opportunities for international trade. By all measures it was a resounding success.

*S. O. 31*

**NATIONAL CANADIAN LIBERATION MONUMENT**

**Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, 55 years ago Canadian soldiers were instrumental in the liberation of Holland.

This week Canadian veterans will revisit their old battlegrounds and pay homage to comrades in arms who lie in Commonwealth war cemeteries.

Today there is a very special ceremony to bear witness to the lasting friendship between the Dutch people and Canada. The people of Apeldoorn in the Netherlands are unveiling a National Canadian Liberation Monument in testimony to the sacrifices made by their liberators. The ceremony will be presided over by Princess Margriet who was born in Ottawa while the royal family lived here.

We thank the people of the Netherlands for this wonderful gesture of remembrance. It honours the sacrifice of those who served in Europe and reminds us of their gift of freedom which we have enjoyed these many years.

On a more personal note, I am pleased that the OPP Bear Hug band, with young Canadians, is assisting with the ceremonies in Europe this year. I wish them and all our veterans well.

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[*Translation*]

**VICTIMS OF THE HOLOCAUST**

**Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, with great pride and great sorrow I rise today in this House to recall the day set aside annually to remember the six million people who were victims of the Holocaust in the second world war.

This day keeps alive the memory of these millions of people who died and whose descendants live here in Canada and throughout the world. This day of Yom Hashoah will commemorate forever the tragic events surrounding their disappearance.

Our thoughts and our prayers blend with those of the many families and friends of the victims. Canadians join with me in the hope that this day of remembrance will remind all people of the events of the past and serve as a warning for those who today continue to commit genocide.

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[*English*]

**TAXATION**

**Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, you do not hear it often but I am going to tell you something that

*S. O. 31*

the government is really good at. With the annual tax filing deadline yesterday, Canadian taxpayers were reminded of how efficient the government is in separating them from their money.

We keep hearing the words tax reduction from the Liberal government, but the reality is there is no increase in take home pay. The finance minister is great at giving projections which sound good, but he is very slow in delivering real tax relief that Canadians can see.

Every taxpayer in the country is wondering, "Why should I send so much of my hard earned income to Ottawa when it wastes it so blatantly? Why should I fund a fountain in Shawinigan or dead rabbit art?"

Never in the history of Canada have so many given so much to so few to get so little. Yes, Canadian taxpayers are tired of being fleeced by the government. Only the Canadian Alliance with the 17% solution will give them true hope.

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**AL PURDY**

**Mr. Rick Limoges (Windsor—St. Clair, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, one of Canada's most famous poets, Al Purdy of Ameliasburgh, Ontario, died on April 21, 2000 at the age of 81. I rise today on behalf of the Government of Canada to recognize the contributions of this poet and to honour his legacy.

• (1405)

Mr. Purdy's works captured the energy and emotions of Canadians in their daily lives and the landscapes that shape our identity. He published 33 books of poetry, including the *The Caribou Horses* and *Collected Poems 1956-86*. Mr. Purdy was twice the recipient of the Governor General's Literary Award and was appointed to the Order of Canada in 1983. This year the League of Canadian Poets presented Al Purdy with a special award declaring him the voice of the land.

Mr. Purdy will be missed and sincere condolences go out to Mr. Purdy's surviving family.

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[Translation]

**MASCOUCHE**

**Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Repentigny, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the parish of Saint-Henri de Mascouche was born in 1750. At that point, its population was 542. This year, the municipality with a population of over 29,000 celebrates its 250th anniversary.

The committee organizing the celebrations, chaired by Pierre Raymond, has prepared a highly varied program of activities that will enable everyone to find an opportunity at least once during the year to celebrate Mascouche of yesterday, today and tomorrow.

I would like to pay tribute to the superb job done by the members of the 250th album committee. They are: Thérèse Patenaude, Huguette Lévesque-Lamoureux, France Tremblay, Diane Beaudet, Chantal Fillion and Bernard Patenaude, past committee chair and mayor, Gilles Forest, former mayor, Laurent Crépeau, Donald Mailly, René Archer, Louis Duval, Julien McKay and historian Denis Gravel, the source of the historical side of the album.

Well done and thanks from the people.

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[English]

**HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY**

**Mr. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today is Holocaust Remembrance Day. Jews all over the world in concert with their fellow citizens commemorate crimes against humanity that are too terrible to be believed but not too terrible to have happened; a genocidal racism in which as Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel put it, "Not all victims were Jews, but all Jews were victims"; where biology was inescapably destiny. Today we remember that the Holocaust is not an abstraction in which six million Jews and 11 million non-Jews were murdered, but where onto each person murdered there is a name, an identity.

I would like to commend l'Assemblée nationale du Québec for unanimously enacting legislation proclaiming today, May 2 officially as Holocaust Remembrance Day in Quebec. I trust that the lesson of Holocaust Remembrance Day, "Never Again" and "human rights for all", will be the universal testament and legacy for all peoples everywhere.

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**NATIONAL CANADIAN LIBERATION MONUMENT**

**Mr. Jim Hart (Okanagan—Coquihalla, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the people of Okanagan—Coquihalla to commemorate the 55th anniversary of the liberation of the Netherlands by Canadian troops.

To mark the 55th anniversary of the liberation and to serve as a lasting reminder of the role of Canadians in securing their freedom, a national monument to the Canadian liberators will be unveiled today by Her Royal Highness Princess Margriet in Apeldoorn.

In May 1995 I attended the Canada remembrance ceremonies in the Netherlands and will never forget the genuine expression of gratitude the people of Holland displayed for the Canadian liberators of their country. The burgemeester of Arnhem told me that in relation to their actions Canadian veterans were far too modest.

The people of the Netherlands will never forget the 7,600 Canadians who gave their lives to liberate their country. Canadians too should be proud of the sacrifices of our veterans and those

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heroes, the young men who did not return to Canada. Because of this the Canadian flag will always fly prominently in Holland.

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[Translation]

**DANIEL PLOUFFE**

**Mr. Denis Paradis (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on March 4, Daniel Plouffe of Brome—Missisquoi was honoured by the U.S. Trotting Association after being named Owner of the Year in the United States by this prestigious association.

Over the past year, Daniel Plouffe has been racking up honours. His horse, Blissfull Hall, won the triple crown for pacers, a very important award in the horse racing world. Moreover, his horse was named Horse of the Year in Canada. The incredible wins of his horse were reported all over America. Daniel Plouffe has made headlines in the newspapers and horse racing magazines all over North America.

He will represent Canada in July, at the World Tournament for Amateur Drivers, which will take place in Italy.

It is always a great pleasure to celebrate success. All the residents of Brome—Missisquoi join me in doing so. This is not just success at the provincial or national level, but success at the international level.

Congratulations to Daniel Plouffe for an extraordinary year in 1999.

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[English]

**VIETNAM WAR**

**Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the 25th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam war should be cause for reflection in many quarters. The Vietnam war was a war that is widely regarded as foreign policy mistake on the part of the U.S. Even former cold war warriors like Robert McNamara have said so. It was a tragedy that marked a generation by showing us that our allies are not always right and that all conflicts should be approached with a self-critical consciousness.

● (1410)

In such a spirit we remember politicians like former NDP leader Tommy Douglas who opposed the war when it was not yet popular to do so. We celebrate the openness of our country Canada to young Americans who refused to participate.

We also remind the current Vietnamese government that it repudiates and abuses the values and goodwill of those who opposed the war when it acts as it did last week by executing Nguyen Thi Hiep, a Canadian citizen who should have been given the benefit of the doubt. She certainly should not have been the

victim of capital punishment, a form of punishment that leaves no room for reconsideration, further evidence or mercy.

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[Translation]

**INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION**

**Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in the area of international co-operation, the last budget was a big disappointment, in spite of the expectations that had been generated.

After talking about a significant increase in the budgets for international assistance in the last throne speech, after boasting about Canada's reputation in the area of international co-operation, after announcing the debt reduction program for the poorest countries, the government has precious little to show for.

It refuses to explain how it intends to achieve the target of 0.7% of the GDP in development assistance, set by the UN.

The increase barely maintains Canada's current level of assistance at 0.27% of the GDP. The ratio was 0.42% when the Liberals took office in 1993-94.

The budget does not specify how the government will follow up on its commitment to eliminate the debt of the poorest countries in the world.

The last budget does nothing to restore Canada's reputation in the area of official development assistance.

Like many things here in this parliament, this is disappointing.

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[English]

**CHILDREN**

**Ms. Aileen Carroll (Barrie—Simcoe—Bradford, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have received letters from 200 members of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers Association in support of the national children's agenda. The teachers are endorsing the recommendations outlined by the Canadian Teachers' Federation. Their proposal calls for an additional allocation of 1% of GDP by the year 2005 phased in over the next five years at a rate of two billion new dollars each year.

The teachers recommend that the funds be allocated to seven priority areas, including a comprehensive early childhood development system, an affordable housing program for low income Canadians, and a national child care strategy. Teachers are well positioned to assess the needs of children and recommend programs and services to ensure the development of their full potential.

The government has made significant progress in supporting the income of families. Now we need to concentrate on supporting early childhood development services.

*Oral Questions***ROSEMARY KATHLEEN HERRON**

**Mrs. Elsie Wayne (Saint John, PC):** Mr. Speaker, I am happy to announce to the House that the PC Party has grown once again with the birth of a tiny Tory on April 19. My hon. colleague from Fundy—Royal and his wonderful wife Beth welcomed spring with the birth of their first child, Rosemary Kathleen Herron. The family is of course overjoyed to have received so many gifts and best wishes from all the parties in the Commons. I would like to inform the House that despite this fact, this is one tiny Tory who is going to stay put.

On behalf of all the members of the PC Party, I would like to convey our heartfelt wishes of happiness and health for the Herron family in the years to come.

\* \* \*

**I AM CANADIAN**

**Mr. John Solomon (Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am not a Republican or a Democrat. I do not spend millions to run for office or hire American consultants or go negative. I do not know Stockwell or Tom or Joe but I am sure they are very nice. I have a health card, not an insurance card. I listen to Cross Country Checkup, not Howard Stern or Rush Limbaugh. I speak for people, not multinational corporations. I believe in inexpensive generic drugs, environmental protection and fair trade deals. I believe that Canada can have an independent foreign policy. Canadian taxpayers are citizens too who value our social programs. And it is pronounced medicare, not Bill 11, okay? Canada is the home of public health care, curling, Codco and the NDP.

My name is John and I am Canadian.

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*[Translation]***PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO THE MIDDLE EAST**

**Mr. Yvon Charbonneau (Anjou—Rivière-des-Prairies, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's visit to the Middle East is a major Canadian investment in peace and co-operation in this region of the world.

Having had the privilege of accompanying the Prime Minister, I urge members and all interested observers to rise above the impression left by the local media coverage and focus on the real meaning of this mission.

• (1415)

Never before had a Canadian Prime Minister found the time or been bold enough to visit this area of the world, although it has played a major role in the genesis of our civilization and has seen more than its share of wars and problems of all sorts.

On behalf of the Canadian people, our Prime Minister wished to convey a message of compassion and encouragement, of friendship and co-operation with these peoples, who have for too long been plunged in insecurity.

Relying on UN resolutions, the Prime Minister had but one concern: to express the support of Canada for a global, lasting and real solution negotiated by the parties.

We must be glad that this mission, which was much appreciated by our hosts, was successful in establishing solid lines of co-operation and friendship between Canada and these Middle Eastern nations.

**ORAL QUESTION PERIOD***[English]***ACOA**

**Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, it is hard to imagine a government that could be more devoted to using taxpayer dollars for its own partisan purposes. Just look at the Prime Minister's riding. Look at the boondoggles from the Minister of Human Resources Development. Look at the hon. member for Ahuntsic.

Today let us look at the spending patterns at the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency. The Liberals spent an extra \$100 million through that agency in the lead up to the last federal election. Apparently the Liberals were desperately trying to hang on to Atlantic seats for fear their defeated cabinet ministers might join the Canadian Alliance.

How does the Prime Minister justify using public money for partisan gain?

**Hon. George S. Baker (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Secretary of State (Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there is a byelection in St. John's West and what we are seeing today is politicking. It was the great Lennox Lewis who coined the word "politricks".

I mention Lennox Lewis because he started his boxing career in Atlantic Canada and he clobbers his opposition. That is exactly what we are going to do to the hon. member's party.

**Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I think he has been kissing the blarney stone too much.

We obtained a list of all ACOA grants, contributions and loans from 1996 to 1999. There was a dramatic increase before and during the 1997 election writ period. Average monthly spending jumped from \$30 million to \$54 million just before the election and to a high of \$71 million by the end of the campaign. It is plain and

*Oral Questions*

simple. It is just like the transitional jobs fund. The Liberals spent the bank in the lead up to the last federal election.

Why did the government find so many ways to spend so much money in the lead up to the last federal election?

**Hon. George S. Baker (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Secretary of State (Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the recent reports of the auditor general and the public accounts both show one thing, that is, there was a period of time when ACOA did spend a lot of money and it was not exactly on good investments. What was that period, as defined by the auditor general and the public accounts? The years 1991 and 1992 when the political party was in that the hon. member wishes to unite with.

**Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, this was not just some kind of coincidence. ACOA spending jumped by a total of \$100 million during the 1997 campaign. That is \$100 million that could have gone to tax relief. It could have gone to hospital beds. It could have gone to education. It could have gone to something useful. Instead, the Liberals spent it on ACOA.

Why did the long-suffering taxpayers have to spend their tax dollars in a vain attempt to elect Liberals in the last federal election?

**Hon. George S. Baker (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Secretary of State (Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, both the auditor general and the public accounts clearly show that the system in effect prior to the Liberals coming to power in 1993 was not acceptable. That is why we spent a lot of time, practically a year, to completely revise the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency.

If I get another question in a minute, I will outline exactly what those changes were.

• (1420)

**Ms. Val Meredith (South Surrey—White Rock—Langley, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister will do whatever it takes to support his Liberal colleagues, especially when the taxpayers are paying for that support.

It cost the taxpayers an extra \$100 million. He lost over half of his Atlantic caucus and has driven one of his former cabinet ministers to the Alliance.

Why did the Prime Minister waste so much taxpayers' dollars in his failed attempt to influence Atlantic Canadian voters?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am glad to answer the question. Yes, we have used the government's economic policies to reduce unemployment. When we started in this government we had 11.5% unemployment. Now we are down to 6.8%. Yes, we have programs to help people have

the dignity of work. We are very proud of that, and two million more Canadians work today because they have a good federal government which cares about their future.

**Ms. Val Meredith (South Surrey—White Rock—Langley, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, this is not about continuing an ongoing program; this is about putting an extra \$100 million of taxpayer money into ACOA before and during the 1997 election in an attempt to protect the jobs of Liberal members of parliament; not average Canadian jobs, but MP jobs.

Why did Canadian taxpayers fund the Liberal campaign in Atlantic Canada?

**Hon. George S. Baker (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Secretary of State (Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, members of the official opposition, who of course want to do away with ACOA, who want to do away with all of the regional programs, who want to cut \$3 billion from the benefits of our senior citizens, should examine the question they are asking today.

Prior to the last federal election—

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

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

**Hon. George S. Baker:** Mr. Speaker, the reason I am asking the official opposition to examine the facts is because for years there have been no grants, as the hon. member calls them, available under ACOA.

When the Liberals took over the first thing we did was to cancel all of the grants and bring in a system of loans for business. If the hon. member would ask me a supplementary question, I would continue to explain the changes we made.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

## HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, faced with the mess at HRDC, the minister sang the praises of her six point plan.

But a report published by Deloitte & Touche on February 2 points out major shortcomings in that plan.

How can the minister claim to reassure the public with her famous plan, when independent analysts say that it misses the mark entirely?

[English]

**Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is wrong. Let us recall what the auditor general said about the action plan. He said that the

*Oral Questions*

action plan prepared by the department represented an exceptional response. What is good for the auditor general is good for me.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the auditor general was referring to immediate needs.

But the six point plan was severely criticized by Deloitte & Touche, experts to whom she turned, and she published a new plan, which is supposedly the same as the draft, the same day as the study. She ignored the experts' advice.

In the situation in which she now finds herself, lurching from one gaffe to another, how can the minister ignore the advice of experts she herself has hired?

[English]

**Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.):** Again, Mr. Speaker, the leader of the Bloc is wrong. He should take time to do some research.

Deloitte & Touche was asked to look at our plan. They made recommendations and we implemented them.

• (1425)

They said that we needed greater cohesiveness to orchestrate the various actions in an integrated fashion. What did we do? We established a grants and contributions team to ensure that we meet their recommendations.

They said that we needed assurance that funds had been transferred according to program requirements. What did we do? We put in place a departmental directive on the issuance of payments, which requires sign-off by senior executives to ensure that the payments are made appropriately.

[Translation]

**Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, let us get serious. Deloitte & Touche considered that the plan does not get to the root of the problem and saw its recommendations shelved.

What does the minister, who has hidden behind this plan for the past six months, have to say now that we know her plan does not get to the bottom of things? Is she refusing to act on the recommendations of these chartered accountants?

[English]

**Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I do not know where the hon. member was. I thought he was at committee today where the representative of Deloitte & Touche said "Yes, indeed, the department came to us and paid us to look at the recommended plan. We gave them advice and the department implemented our recommendations". What could be better?

[Translation]

**Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I was on the committee and at no point did the firm representative say that his recommendations had been followed. He did not know.

The minister is obviously overwhelmed by the crisis at the Human Resources Development Canada.

Mr. Prime Minister, I appeal to you—

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

**The Speaker:** Remarks and questions must always be addressed to the Chair.

**Mr. Paul Crête:** Mr. Speaker, I appeal to the Prime Minister to see whether the only way to regain control is not to implement the plan of the Bloc, a very simple two point plan: the resignation of the minister and the launching of a public and independent inquiry.

[English]

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, all the members on this side of the House and I have great confidence in the abilities and the hard work of the Minister of Human Resources Development.

\* \* \*

## HEALTH

**Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, last evening I stood with Friends of Medicare on the steps of the Alberta legislature. I stood together with people who believe that Canadians should receive health care when they need it, regardless of their financial circumstances or where they happen to live.

Sadly, the Prime Minister was not there, the Minister of Health was not there and the Minister of Justice was not there. No representative of the government was there.

There is no disgrace in standing together with Friends of Medicare. Why was the health minister not there?

**Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the position of the NDP on health is always the same. First, they believe that the status quo is sufficient; second, they seem to believe that simply adding more money is enough. That is not right.

Everybody else in this country, the government and even the Canadian Alliance, has put ideas on the table to change health care because we believe that is the way to improve it. Why has the NDP not come forward with a single new idea to reform and improve health care in this country? Why will NDP members not join with us in making an effort to improve medicare?

**Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, in case the health minister has not noticed, Premier Klein has now laid out



the final form of the health privatization bill for Albertans. He has now invoked closure.

The faint hope of Canadians that Alberta's premier would actually listen to Albertans and kill the bill is now fast fading.

I ask the Prime Minister, besides watching from the sidelines while health care goes two tier, what plans does the federal government have to take action and stand for medicare?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have said hundreds of times in the House of Commons that every piece of legislation passed by any government has to meet the five conditions of the national health care act of Canada.

If they do not, we will just do what we have done before. We were the first government ever to cut funds to a province that did not follow the rules that were established by this parliament.

\* \* \*

• (1430)

#### PUBLIC WORKS AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES

**Mr. Gilles Bernier (Tobique—Mactaquac, PC):** Mr. Speaker, the auditor general reported in November that 90% of untendered government contracts should have been put up for bids. I checked and found that 3,186 contracts awarded by public works went to companies that donated to Liberal Party candidates in the 1997 election and 54% of these were untendered.

Can the Minister of Public Works and Government Services explain why his department is giving so many untendered contracts to Liberal Party supporters?

**Hon. Alfonso Gagliano (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, most of the contracts go to public tender. Some contracts depend on the amount, on the circumstance and whether they are sole source, but it is a very minimal amount. More than two-thirds of all the contracts of not only my department but all Government of Canada departments are through public tender.

**Mr. Gilles Bernier (Tobique—Mactaquac, PC):** Mr. Speaker, the auditor general said that 90% of untendered contracts would not pass public scrutiny. Public works has put three-quarters of a billion dollars into the pockets of companies that donated to Liberal candidates, most of them untendered.

Will the minister invite the auditor general to review in detail all the untendered contracts awarded by public works and report back to the House here in parliament?

**Hon. Alfonso Gagliano (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the auditor general always

reviews what we do in government. We do not have to invite him, he is already there. When the auditor general makes his report, parliament takes account of what he reports.

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#### ORGANIZED CRIME

**Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, operation sidewinder was a joint RCMP-CSIS task force that laid out in great detail how Asian crime gangs and Chinese spy agencies were infiltrating Canada.

Yesterday the parliamentary secretary claimed that operation sidewinder had not been shut down. In fact it was shut down in 1997.

Why is there so little concern about national security on that side of the House that the parliamentary secretary would not even be briefed with information about operation sidewinder?

**Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague is incorrect. It was not shut down at all. It was a study and it was completed. In fact, when a study is complete, that is the end of the study.

**Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, Canadian Alliance):** That is a very interesting, Mr. Speaker, because in a letter from SIRC it says "The committee's review will examine project sidewinder, including its termination and whether CSIS has acted—". SIRC is looking into the termination.

How can the minister stand in the House and say that it is not terminated when the security intelligence review committee is looking into its termination?

**Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague is no doubt well aware that both the RCMP and CSIS have indicated that it was an excellent report. SIRC is reviewing this report as it has the authority to review any report.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

**Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, following a request submitted to the Department of Human Resources Development to obtain the invoices justifying the grants to Placeteco, we were told that we had to go the access to information route. We did that and there are no invoices on file.

The minister justified these grants by referring to the existence of invoices. Why is she hiding these invoices?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

**Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member has made an access request, the information will be made available.

This question gives me a chance to update the House on the number of access to information requests that the department has received. We are now up to 1,000.

We have a lot of work to do to provide the information that different groups want and we will do that to the best of our ability.

• (1435)

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, to make sure the minister understands clearly, I repeat that we submitted our request under the Access to Information Act. We contacted her department. We used every possible avenue. We did not see anything that looked remotely like an invoice.

My question to the minister is: Are these not public documents, documents on which she relies to approve grants, and do we not have the right to see these invoices? We want to see them.

*[English]*

**Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows the access to information program is managed by the department under the auspices of the information commissioner. If the hon. member made the request, he will receive the documentation, as is appropriate.

\* \* \*

**ORGANIZED CRIME**

**Mr. John Reynolds (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, Robert Fahlman, a former RCMP criminal intelligence officer, said “The Mounties were disappointed with CSIS stopping sidewinder”. Robert Proulx, director of RCMP criminal intelligence, wrote the director general of CSIS arguing that the original sidewinder report was altered, sometimes incorrectly, and, in some cases, some information had been completely removed. He said “I want those sections to remain because they are integral to the integrity of the report”.

The minister knows the law with regard to altering and destroying documents. Why was the law broken if not to cover up?

**Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague is aware that SIRC is evaluating these allegations and will review the report. When it does, it will report to me.

**Mr. John Reynolds (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, since 1993 the Liberal govern-

ment has gone out of its way to court trade and business opportunities with China. In fact, the Prime Minister is planning to lead another trade mission to China later this year.

Is the real reason the government and the Prime Minister are turning a blind eye to the threat of Asian gangs and Chinese spy agencies setting up shop in Canada because they do not want to interfere?

**Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague is well aware that we have an excellent security intelligence agency and an excellent police force.

My hon. colleague is also well aware that the government recognizes the need and has indicated clearly many times that we will give the police and the security intelligence agency the tools and the funding to do the job. The government has given \$810 million of new money to my department to make sure that these agencies are able to fulfil their tasks.

\* \* \*

*[Translation]***CINAR**

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères—Les-Patriotes, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in response to a question we asked him yesterday, the Minister of National Revenue said that, for there to be voluntary disclosure, and I quote “The government or any other entity must not have already taken measures to recover funds belonging to the state”.

Are we to understand from this response from the Minister of National Revenue that CINAR would still qualify for the voluntary disclosure program, despite the fact that the RCMP itself admits that the case apparently involves fraud?

**Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of National Revenue and Secretary of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, first, with respect to the corporation referred to, the rules of confidentiality obviously prevent me from commenting.

Second, concerning the fairness initiative, which includes a voluntary disclosure measure, the meaning of voluntary disclosure is obviously clear from the expression itself: the case must not have been brought to the attention of the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency if one is to benefit from this aspect of the fairness initiative.

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères—Les-Patriotes, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I again quote the response given by the minister yesterday. For a corporation to be eligible for the voluntary disclosure program “the government or any other entity must not have already taken measures to recover funds belonging to the state”.

*Oral Questions*

Will the minister tell us whether or not he has taken action to recover the amounts CINAR is alleged to have fraudulently obtained?

**Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of National Revenue and Secretary of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, once again, the question has to do with a specific corporation and, under the rule of confidentiality, I am obviously unable to comment.

I will not comment because all Canadians understand the rule of confidentiality, support it and certainly understand its importance. The government will ensure that this rule is respected.

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*[English]***IMMIGRATION**

**Mr. Leon E. Benoit (Lakeland, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, last summer 600 illegal migrants arrived on Canada's shores. The immigration minister assured Canadians that those people would be processed quickly and dealt with appropriately.

It is now 10 months later and they are either still detained or have disappeared. We have now been told to expect more than twice as many this summer.

How will the minister handle this year's influx of illegal migrants when she still has not dealt with those of last year?

• (1440)

**Hon. Elinor Caplan (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to inform the member that there have been no indications of any boats on their way to Canada. However, if there are, we are now prepared to handle the situation because as of what happened last year. That is simply good management. We intend to intercept the boats. We will detain them and we will have a speedy determination.

As the member knows, I recently went to China to discuss expediting removals with the Chinese government so that we can return those Chinese nationals who are ready to go home to China.

**Mr. Leon E. Benoit (Lakeland, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the problem is not with another government, the problem is with this government.

Five hundred of the 600 illegal migrants who came last summer have still not been processed by this government. When this government mismanages billions of taxpayers' dollars it affects people's standard of living, but when this government mismanages security, justice or immigration it affects people's lives.

How can the minister be so callous and mismanage her department in a way that affects so many people's lives?

**Hon. Elinor Caplan (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I disagree with just about everything the member opposite has said.

We intercepted those boats last summer and detained the individuals. They have had due process and 100 are removal ready at this time. We are seeking travel documents. There are an additional 350 who are deciding now whether they want to drag out this process through the courts and make further appeals. That is their right because we believe in due process.

I want the member opposite to know that we are anticipating every eventuality and we are prepared. That is good management.

\* \* \*

*[Translation]***HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT**

**Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in the case of the Placeteco invoices, either the Minister of Human Resources Development did not understand or she did not want to understand.

The opposition has used every means at its disposal, including access to information: no invoice was to be found in the general file of Placeteco.

Since she is basing her defence on these documents in the Placeteco matter, will the minister agree here in this House to make these invoices available? They are public documents, and we want to see them. Will she agree to this?

*[English]*

**Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, when we talk about papers from an individual business there are privacy concerns. I would encourage the hon. member to use the access to information process so that the appropriate information can be made available. That is what the process is there to do and I would encourage him to use it.

\* \* \*

**FINANCE**

**Ms. Sarmite Bulte (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance.

At the recent International Monetary Fund and World Bank meetings, which were held in Washington, protesters decried the exclusion of civil society.

Could the minister tell the House what the government is doing to encourage the participation of civil society in these talks and also in discussions at that level?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member's question is very pertinent because it reflects on the legitimate concerns that many NGOs have about the process of globalization.

The response is really twofold, one at the national level. Over the course of the last four years I have, on a regular basis, met with the pertinent NGOs. In fact, just before we went to the meeting in Washington, the Minister for International Cooperation and myself met with them again.

At the national level, the president of the World Bank has told me that in the course of the last couple of months he has met with over 60 NGOs. The World Bank has in fact gone on line in order to conduct a dialogue with these NGOs. The question in fact is very pertinent.

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**FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Gurmant Grewal (Surrey Central, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, in one year alone Canada poured \$60 million of CIDA aid into Vietnam for so-called justice reform and good governance. Last week's execution of a Canadian shows that this investment in the Communist justice system is an abysmal failure.

Why does this government not stop investing in a Vietnam system that abuses human rights?

• (1445)

**Hon. Maria Minna (Minister for International Cooperation, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, first I want to say that our bilateral program is \$16 million. As a result of the horrendous behaviour of the Vietnamese government, I have postponed indefinitely all consultations on future programming in Vietnam.

**Mr. Gurmant Grewal (Surrey Central, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, we all regret that the minister has failed in her management.

CIDA invested \$59.17 million to reform the Vietnamese justice system. Nguyen Thi Hiep was brutally executed by a firing squad, by the very system which Canadian taxpayers were made to invest in. Where is justice reform in that system?

**Hon. Maria Minna (Minister for International Cooperation, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is evident that not only Canada but the World Bank and many other organizations were working with Vietnam to assist it to become a modern, democratic, moral society.

Obviously what has happened in the last number of days has been absolutely unacceptable. It is why, as I already said to the hon. member, I have stopped all consultations on future programming for Vietnam at this point.

**HEALTH**

**Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we know the Minister of Health is feeling kind of touchy and defensive when he starts to attack us for not having any suggestions. We have done nothing else but make suggestions for years. Perhaps I will ask a question of the Minister for International Trade because we have not been able to get an answer from the Minister of Health.

What is the Minister for International Trade's position with respect to the relationship between chapter 11 of NAFTA and what is going on in Alberta with respect to bill 11? Canadians and Albertans have a right to know before the bill is passed what the government regards as the NAFTA implications.

**Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear that it is Canada's right to regulate and protect fundamental Canadian values within the health care sector, as well as in education.

As I have said time and again, those Canadian values as defined by the Canada Health Act are fully protected under NAFTA. The issue here is the Canadian health system which the government is committed to preserving fully for all Canadians.

**Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am not sure whether that was much of an improvement and whether or not I should go back to the Minister of Health.

The fact of the matter is that we do not have an opinion from the government as to the NAFTA implications of bill 11. Canadians need to know that and the Canadian government needs to have an opinion on that before that bill passes. Closure has now been invoked.

The Minister of Health said he was seeking opinions on this matter. What has he found out? What is the position of the government? What is it going to do about it if it is found that it does have NAFTA implications?

**Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the question does not get any better as the hon. member raises his voice. The answer is quite obvious. I have expressed the concern of the Government of Canada to the Government of Alberta about NAFTA.

The matter is being debated in the Alberta legislature. There are amendments before that body and we will determine the result when the vote is taken.

My point is that the NDP comes to this discussion with no fresh ideas about how to improve medicare. It is the same old status quo from the same old NDP. It is not good enough for this government and it is not good enough for Canadians.

*Oral Questions***PUBLIC WORKS AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES**

**Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC):** Mr. Speaker, in 1997 in Ontario, Public Works and Government Services Canada gave 1,845 contracts worth \$361 million to companies that donated to the province's 103 federal Liberal candidates. Some 64% of the contracts were untendered. If one did not give money to the governing party, chances are one did not get the contract. The auditor general has condemned this practice.

Will the minister call in the auditor general again to investigate why the minister's department is handing out so many untendered contracts that disproportionately reward government supporters?

**Hon. Alfonso Gagliano (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I do not know where the hon. member got those figures. It was just yesterday that I looked at the figures and in my department 66% of the contracts went to public tender. Only 6% were sole sourced and the balance were under the program where, as we advised before, we give a contract if there is no other possibility. The hon. member has all the figures wrong.

The auditor general is there on a daily basis and he audits all the programs that we have. I do not have to invite him. He is already there.

• (1450)

**Mr. Peter MacKay:** Once again he has contradicted the auditor general. We will see tomorrow who is right.

\* \* \*

**JUSTICE**

**Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC):** Mr. Speaker, the government's very liberal approach to crime has provided \$450,000 in a grant to the Elizabeth Fry Society so that it could fully support and wish every success to Karla Homolka's bid for early release into a halfway house. Within the year the same society will provide favourable representations to the parole board for early release.

Rehabilitation support for prisoners is important, but where is the balance in our justice system which forces taxpayers to fund the early release of convicted sex killers while the rights of the French and Mahaffy families are ignored?

**Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Elizabeth Fry Society speaks on behalf of offenders, women offenders in particular. It is an independent, non-profit organization which speaks on behalf of women offenders. It does not decide who is paroled. That is done by Correctional Service Canada or the National Parole Board.

**GUN CONTROL**

**Mr. Steve Mahoney (Mississauga West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this afternoon in the city of Toronto representatives of the provincial weapons enforcement unit of Ontario, the Toronto police area firearms office, and the United States Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms announced the uncovering of a major international firearms smuggling operation.

Could the Minister of Justice inform the House of what her department's role was and, most important, the role of the Canadian firearms registration system in this operation?

**Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I do want to confirm that Canadian and U.S. authorities have uncovered what is believed to be the largest international firearms smuggling ring in North America.

Over 22,000 firearms and components were seized. To quote the Toronto police service which was involved in this seizure, "the investigation commenced as a result of the new Firearms Act that included the creation of the Canadian firearms registration system".

\* \* \*

**GRAIN TRANSPORTATION**

**Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the grain transportation system, dominated by the Canadian Wheat Board, has just dished out \$44 million for rate increases to Canadian farmers.

Grain farmers and Canada's grain companies have joined with the government's own experts in calling for the removal of the Canadian Wheat Board's iron fisted domination, yet the Liberals refuse to act. This inaction has led to rate increases instead of reductions.

My question is for the Prime Minister. Why is preserving the control of the Canadian Wheat Board more important to the government than lower rates for farmers?

**Hon. David M. Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I answered yesterday to a question from the NDP, the Canadian Transportation Agency was fully within its statutory authority when it issued the authority for the increase last week.

I know this has caused some concern with producers, in particular on the prairies, but shortly I will be coming before the House with a package of reforms which will be fair and equitable. The bottom line is that those reforms will benefit western farmers. I hope the Reform or Alliance Party will be there to support the bill when it comes in.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]***HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT**

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in the matter of the Placeteco invoices, the minister has told us three times today to use access to information.

I repeat, for the third time, that we have done so. Not only have we done so, but we received the file yesterday, May 1, a big file without a single invoice in it. To the claim that it is confidential, I reply that in a number of other instances we have received invoices and pay slips. There was no invoice in the Placeteco file.

I ask the minister why the invoices are not in the file. Were there any in the first place?

• (1455)

*[English]*

**Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I have said on a number of occasions, we have reviewed this file. Indeed the moneys that were presented to Placeteco were fully identified in the context of appropriate terms and conditions of the agreement.

Again, access to information is a process whereby information is reviewed and is protected according to privacy decisions. I do not make those decisions. They are made in the context of the act of this House.

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**PATENTED MEDICINES**

**Mr. John Solomon (Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. Recent WTO rulings on patented drugs will again increase drug costs for Canadians.

The Liberals broke their 1993 promise to protect generic drugs, so brand name drug prices have soared adding billions to our health costs. More health dollars are now spent on drugs than on doctors' fees and too many people have to choose between filling their prescriptions or buying food.

Will the Liberal government at least draw a line in the sand and appeal the WTO ruling on drug patents or, better still, will the Prime Minister finally stand up for Canadians and kill Bill C-91, like he promised seven years ago?

**Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member may have been watching the news lately to hear about how citizens of the United States are crossing our borders because our drug prices are significantly lower than they are in the United States.

He may think that the Patented Medicine Prices Review Board in fact should have credit for the fact that Canadian patented medicine prices are lower than in the United States and should be applauding the government for that.

As to the appeal, we will take the case under consideration and we will determine at the appropriate time what remedies we should seek.

\* \* \*

**THE ECONOMY**

**Mr. Norman Doyle (St. John's East, PC):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. The minister was in Newfoundland a few days ago. He publicly stated that he was willing to consider providing a 10 year holiday on the equalization clawback for have not provinces.

That caused quite a stir in Newfoundland because this is a battle that the premier, the opposition, and the people of the province have been waging for quite some time. Is the minister serious about a new equalization arrangement for Newfoundland and the have not provinces?

**Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, what I said in Newfoundland is something that I have said on many occasions. In terms of Newfoundland and in terms of Atlantic Canada it is very clear that the development of a modern economy requires a leg up.

The government is prepared to stand behind Atlantic Canada because we recognize that the depth of entrepreneurship, the educational institutions and the basic research that is there all can combine to give Atlantic Canada a very strong economy, and we will make sure that it happens.

\* \* \*

**SPORTS**

**Mr. Walt Lastewka (St. Catharines, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, a month ago the Secretary of State for Amateur Sport announced some additional funding for Canadian athletes. Could the secretary of state update us on what he is doing to help national coaches in our sports federations?

*[Translation]*

**Hon. Denis Coderre (Secretary of State (Amateur Sport), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, last Friday our government showed once again that amateur sport is a priority for us.

We have invested an additional \$5.2 million to help our olympic and paralympic athletes prepare in addition to those who often make a difference and are too often forgotten: our trainers. Funding has now increased from \$8 million to \$11 million.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Since the last budget our government invested \$13 million more, and it is only the beginning. Once again we walk the talk.

\* \* \*

**GRAIN TRANSPORTATION**

**Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out to the transport minister that the highly regulated statutory freight rate system that is currently in place is exactly what is wrong with grain transportation. That is why there is a 4.5% increase in rates.

The savings from grain transportation reform would give farmers an average of \$15,000 per year if it were deregulated. Why again is this minister and the Prime Minister willing to continue with the regulated freight system that is driving our farmers into bankruptcy? Let us see an end to it. Will you end it with your new legislation?

**The Speaker:** Please address questions through the Chair.

**Hon. David M. Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, when we bring in the bill which hopefully will take effect for the beginning of the grain season in August we will see a change in the regime that has penalized producers, has penalized railways and has penalized grain companies. It has penalized everybody in the system for the last 60, 70, 80, 100 years.

● (1500)

This government has taken its responsibilities. We have commissioned two prominent Canadians, Justice Estey and Mr. Arthur Kroeger. We have the benefit of their advice and will be moving on a package of reforms. Given the hon. member's enthusiasm, I know that we can count on his support.

\* \* \*

*[Translation]***EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

**Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in a press conference yesterday, the Mouvement autonome et solidaire des sans-emploi voiced its support of the Bloc Québécois by calling for the Minister of Human Resources Development to proceed as promptly as possible with an in-depth reform of the employment insurance program.

When will the minister respond to this heart-felt cry from the jobless, and when will she finally decide to act?

*[English]*

**Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, if we want to look at what has been happening for the unemployed, we can look at the fact that two million Canadians who were not working in 1993 are working today. We can look at the fact that we have the lowest rate of unemployment in Canada in decades.

We can look at the investments that this government has been making in areas that have not had the opportunity to benefit from the surge in the economic growth in Canada. Those are the kinds of investments that we feel are important. Those are our responses to the unemployed.

\* \* \*

**PUBLISHING INDUSTRY**

**Ms. Wendy Lill (Dartmouth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

Last year we saw the minister surrender to the U.S. on magazines, but to her credit it was at least after a fight. Yesterday she indicated that she is willing to give up our newspapers without even fighting.

It is demeaning that our culture minister goes to Boston to show Americans a beer ad so they will "understand us better". If she thinks that Americans do not understand us, why would she allow Americans to control Canadian newsrooms? Why is she ignoring 30 years of studies which are firm in opposing foreign control of newspapers?

**Hon. Sheila Copps (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would never allow foreign control of newspapers.

\* \* \*

**FISHERIES**

**Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore, PC):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

Of the first nations bands fishing in Atlantic Canada, how many and which ones are fishing under band conservation regulations instead of Department of Fisheries and Oceans conservation regulations?

**The Speaker:** Order, please. That question is very specific. If the hon. minister wants to answer, I will permit him to do so.

**Hon. Harbance Singh Dhaliwal (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, conservation is a priority for anyone who is fishing under conservation rules to make sure that we have a sustainable fishery for the future.

*Supply*

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1505)

[*English*]

### SUPPLY

#### ALLOTTED DAY—GENETICALLY MODIFIED FOODS

The House resumed consideration of the motion and of the amendment.

**Mr. Steve Mahoney (Mississauga West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I was earlier pointing out some interesting anomalies in the political structure and relating them to this issue. I do not want to go back there because I think I made the point that we have a genetically modified political party in our midst. I will let people think about that.

The point I want to stress is why an opposition party would feel the need to put forward a motion that would require tremendous regulatory efforts by the government to mandate labels on products that are clearly tested and go through a very stringent safety program. Perhaps we could deal with the facts instead of the fearmongering that we see around this issue.

I am sure it is confusing, if not boring to most Canadians when they hear the issues around modifying food genetically. I am sure it is extremely important, however, to the agriculture producers, to the industry, and to all of the different associations and groups that work in the industry. That is why this government has attempted to work with all of those groups to ensure there is a process in place which will provide the safety mechanisms and checks for food that will be sold to the consumer.

Some comments were made that perhaps the government was not taking this motion seriously enough. There may be a reason for that suggestion or that feeling. The reason is that it smells a little more like pure politics rather than dealing with the facts. I want to take a moment, if I may, to share some of the facts, the background and the research that we have done on this issue.

The government is looking for a solution to the problem which will provide a level of confidence to the Canadian consumer while at the same time allowing producers to access the new science and technology that is available. In virtually every walk of life science and technology grows in leaps and bounds. There are tremendous advances, virtually on a daily basis. We have to make sure that we stay abreast of all of them and not simply scare people into thinking there are problems.

• (1510)

In that regard we invested \$90 million in the last budget, not only to ensure that we stay on top and on the cutting edge of this biotechnology, but also to ensure that our food inspection and regulatory system remains first class.

In that area I want to say once again that Canada has a reputation for having the finest safety system for food inspection in the world. It is not just standing and beating our chests or doing a beer commercial and saying “I am Canadian”, it is a fact.

Health Canada works very closely with all different agencies to ensure that the Canadian people can trust the products that go on the shelves of their grocery stores. It works very diligently with the pharmaceutical industry to ensure that there is safety in the drugs that are produced. It works very closely the companies which produce health products to ensure that what is being put on the shelves is safe.

I talked about many of those different products that have burst on to the scene in recent years, which hopefully will help to prevent illness and make Canadians more healthy, with the idea that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

Health Canada is very diligent about ensuring that all of the products which are available to the consumer are safe. I would suggest that is true in the case of GMOs just as much as it is in health products and drugs.

It is extremely important that we realize what we as parliamentarians, as a government and indeed as members of the opposition should be saying to the Canadian people. We should be saying that we are prepared to ensure that the new sciences, the new biotechnological efforts that are being put into modifying food for the purpose of increasing production and making more food available to Canadians, will ensure that the food is nutritious and will fit into the Canadian diet without causing any form of illness. We should stop the fearmongering that this motion is attempting to bring about.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I have listened to what my colleague from Mississauga West has had to say before and after Oral Questions. I note that he has become more serious.

Before Oral Question Period, he sort of went off topic. He referred to the former Reform Party members, now members of the Canadian Alliance. This was a kind of departure from the debate on GMOs.

Now that he has got back to being serious, I would like to ask him some serious questions. He seems not to be in favour of



labelling GMOs. This does not mean banning them or preventing studies or experiments. There is simply a need to respect the public's right to know what it is eating.

When he refers to the numerous consequences of labelling, I would like to hear some figures from him. How much will this cost? Has he evaluated this or examined the studies? Even if he managed to come up with figures, we must ask ourselves: If people want to know what they are eating, is this not a right that must be respected?

Why is Canada one of the countries most vehemently opposed to such labelling? The European countries have adopted it, as have Japan and South Korea. These are civilized nations. Why would what is good for Europe be bad for us and for our producers? There seems to be a world trend toward being more and more in favour of labelling.

I would like to hear his explanation of this. It seems more as if he were inviting us not to support a policy of transparency. It is as if he had something to hide. I trust that is not what he wants people to think, that Canadian farmers have something to hide.

• (1515)

As regards the voluntary code of ethics, voluntary regulation or voluntary labelling, the member for Rosemont recently introduced a bill asking broadcasters to apply the code of ethics they introduced in the early 1990s. We know what voluntary codes mean. They are almost never applied.

I would like the member to clarify his position, to give us the technical and financial data that would justify his position. Otherwise, we do not understand his opposition to the public's right to receive information on something vital, something that affects their health.

[*English*]

**Mr. Steve Mahoney:** Mr. Speaker, I am curious about the question. By the way, I could not resist poking a bit of fun at the genetically modified political party. There is nothing wrong with having a bit of that mixed in with what I perceive to be a very serious topic, but let me answer the gentleman.

No, I have not done an analysis of the cost. This is where I have some concern. The question was about why we are not in favour of voluntary labelling. Those were the member's words through the translator, and I am assuming they were translated correctly. We are. We already have voluntary labelling. We have encouraged the development of standards for the voluntary labelling of new foods including what might be called designer foods. This project was launched by the Canadian Council of Grocery Distributors and the Canadian General Standards Board.

### *Supply*

Let me just add, in answer to the hon. member, that the government has asked the Canadian General Standards Board to develop a Canadian standard for voluntary labelling in consultation with consumer groups, producer groups, interest groups and other governments. If the member is saying we should have voluntary labelling, I think Bloc members should stand to clarify their position.

To make labelling mandatory when we already have an extremely successful inspection system in place to ensure both quality and safety in terms of the products that hit the kitchen table is nothing more than asking to extend the long arm of government and bureaucracy. Although I have not done the cost analysis, I assume it would cost a tremendous amount of money to the industry and would be a price that need not be paid.

**Mrs. Pauline Picard:** Sit down, sit down.

**Mr. Steve Mahoney:** I do not need to sit down because you do not happen to agree. Voluntary labelling is a totally different issue. It is like Bloc members to sit there and say "sit down" when they do not like the message, when they do not like the truth that comes from this side of the House.

**Mr. Lynn Myers (Waterloo—Wellington, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to my hon. colleague who uses great eloquence in the House. With grace, wit and humour he is always on his mark in terms of how he delivers his speeches. He knows exactly the kinds of issues that affect Canadians, and on this there was no exception.

I was interested in the Bloc member's question. Some \$37 million went missing in terms of federal money that went to Quebec. Even the auditor general of Quebec is quoted in *Le Devoir* as wondering where that money was. They can caterwaul all they want over there. They can natter away, but the reality is that there are \$37 million of federal money for which they cannot account.

I have a question for the hon. member for Mississauga West. He represents a great part of Ontario. I listened with interest to how he noted that the Reform-CCRAP alliance has been genetically modified. The only comment I would add is that in light of the genetically modified Reform-CCRAP alliance perhaps we should have an amendment today that requires the Canada Elections Act to be amended so that there is a warning label on the ballot to indicate that those people opposite are nothing more than the reformed, warmed over people they were before.

Never mind that. Does the hon. member agree that Canada, under the leadership of the Prime Minister and the minister of agriculture, has the best food safety system in the world? Does he agree that as a result of what we have been doing we have nutritious quality food?

*Supply*

• (1520)

Does he agree that instead of taking cheap political partisan shots all members opposite should be standing and congratulating the government, the minister of agriculture and the Prime Minister for doing a fabulous job to protect food and food safety in our great country?

**Mr. Steve Mahoney:** Mr. Speaker, I think we should stand to congratulate the member for Waterloo—Wellington for those wonderful words.

On a serious note, though, I want to share with the House what actually takes place. It is important that Canadians understand that the motion was drafted with some political intent. All GMO foods must be submitted to Health Canada for a strict safety evaluation by an expert team of toxicologists, biologists, environmental scientists, chemists and nutritionists to determine if the food is as safe and nutritious as food already in the Canadian marketplace. I do not know if I want to eat it after they have all had a hand in it.

The team considers how the crop was developed, including the molecular biological data which characterize the genetic change, the composition of the food compared to its traditional counterpart food, the nutritional information compared to non-modified counterparts, and the potential for introducing new allergens and toxins.

We are on this file as a government. We are doing the job. To the question asked by the hon. member on whether Canadians can feel safe with the quality of food I say absolutely, with the systems we have in place.

**Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be here today to speak to the Bloc motion concerning mandatory labelling of foods produced from genetically modified plants and seeds.

From what I have heard from the Bloc Quebecois speakers today, they seem to place a high emphasis on the organic farm industry. That is what they seem to be trying to represent with the motion today. At the end of the debate we will see that a broader perspective should be taken and the whole of agriculture, including a lot of social aspects of the issue, has to be examined.

The biotech industry is important to Canada and is growing. It must be debated within reason and not have restrictions placed on it that would unduly hamper, for no good scientific reason, the advancements that will make our lives and the lives of our grandchildren better in the years to come.

There are 282 biotechnology companies in Canada. There are 10,000 employees in the industry, 1,900 in agriculture and food processing and 6,700 in the health care sector. Employment

forecasts are that it will increase by 10% over the next year. Biotechnology company sales are in the neighbourhood of \$450 million in seed, feed, foods and other products. The last statistic that I will give is that 46% of Canadian biotechnology companies operate in health care and 29% in agriculture. The issue is much bigger than just food supply.

A few years ago most people would not have heard of biotechnology or knew what it meant. Scientific breakthroughs such as Dolly the cloned sheep have vaulted the word into headlines around the country. However, most of us still have the uncomfortable feeling that we really do not know what biotechnology means. That is where the government of the day needs to come in with excellent information programs for the general public so that public fears will be allayed and people who are fearmongering, like some of the special interest groups are doing, will not hold sway with their arguments.

The government must address the concerns of Canadians who chose not to eat food containing GMOs, as well as Canadians who want to choose the increased variety at lower produce costs. We see that this can be accomplished through voluntary labelling in the marketplace, including food companies, grocery stores and fast food outlets quickly going to a voluntary system in order to continue making sales.

• (1525)

I have heard a few red herrings being thrown out, particularly by our NDP friends, with regard to Europe not accepting beef that had received growth hormones at some point while it was being fattened for slaughter. That one case is the best example that science should rule the trade world. Europe has been found at fault in that issue and has no scientific reason to restrict imports. As a result it is paying penalties for that.

I will not go into the rest of the NDP logic with regard to supporting mandatory labelling, but it is a poorly thought out position for a party to take.

Mandatory labelling of all genetically modified organisms would place a significant financial burden on Canadian farmers, food manufacturers and consumers. Increased costs of product segregation beginning at the farm gate would dramatically increase the costs of storing, transporting and processing Canadian grain. It is not impossible to do this, but if it were a mandatory requirement by government regulation the question of who would pay the costs would have to be decided. All technological requirements of segregation would be very complex and would increase the cost of our food.

The Bloc is calling for this in spite of the fact that there is no scientific evidence of any kind that food produced from genetically modified seeds is any different from food produced from seeds that have not been genetically modified. We are talking about the same food with no detectable change to it.

*Supply*

Because of the increased costs, the product price for consumers would rise and the net commodity price for farmers would fall. Farmers have traditionally never been able to pass along the costs. I do not see how this would be any different if mandatory labelling were required.

Farmer choice would also fall. Because of increased costs farmers would have fewer commodity varieties to choose from. In modern farming practices it is important to have access to GMO crops due to disease that is better controlled through genetic manipulation of the plant characteristics. Consumer choice both in terms of price and variety would also be lessened by mandatory labelling. Without having genetically modified crops available, all these options would be taken away and we would all be poorer for it.

Consumer demand has created a market for products voluntarily labelled free of genetically modified organisms. No one has any problem with that. If the farmer is fully compensated for his production he will produce what the consumer is willing to buy.

Federal regulators recognized this demand far too late and have failed to develop guidelines for voluntary labelling. I know that is currently being done, but it should have been done when GMOs were being researched back in the early nineties and science was advancing to the point where we knew they would be available.

Under a voluntary labelling system GMO-free foods would be marketed similarly to organic foods. Voluntary labelling would address the calls for consumer choice. Ultimately that is exactly where it has to be. I will point out later in my speech some of the problems that consumers face if food prices become very high. Consumers would shift to various types of foods to find a source of protein.

Voluntary labelling would address the needs of producers, giving producers who want to grow GMO-free crops the ability to develop niche markets. There is nothing the matter with that.

• (1530 )

Voluntary labelling would also correctly dilute the costs associated with segregation. Here again it would be farmers, the grain handling industry, the grain companies, the railways and the truckers all responding to a legitimate market signal indicating that there was a demand for segregation and the foodstuff that is either GMO or non-GMO.

I hear a lot of negativity that it is people who do not want the GMOs but as we see, developments are coming along so that people will demand the GMO product and GMO food. One indicator for the poor countries of the third world in particular is that rice is to be modified. It will give them a vitamin source which they do not currently have which will prevent blindness which is

endemic in some parts of the world due to diet. Voluntary labelling would correctly distribute the costs associated with segregation.

I have spoken about the size of the industry in Canada and that it is growing. I should point out at this time that other countries are booming along with their research and development. In particular the third world countries realize it is the only way they will be able to feed their ever increasing populations. It is only the super rich countries that have the luxury of saying "Maybe we should label this, maybe we should scare everybody off and we will not have to worry about feeding our population because we can afford to do it". An awful lot of poor people around the world cannot afford that luxury. In fact there are a lot of poor people in Canada who cannot afford it either.

Biotechnology offers significant benefits. One benefit is drugs to treat cancers, AIDS and diabetes. We also see increased and more effective vaccines, antibiotics, insulin and hormone replacement. We see new high nutrition foods, new production methods and varieties that will allow farmers to better manage weeds and insects while reducing the use of chemical pesticides. We will also see opportunities for better management of municipal waste and toxic spills.

The biotech industry has indicated that its research will have great benefits for the future. Examples are new vaccines for common diseases such as malaria and cholera. Those diseases kill millions of people each year, not in Canada but in third world countries which have those problems. There is gene therapy for hereditary disorders. It is also possible to remove allergens from food crops. There is the improvement to the nutrition or shelf life of fruits, vegetables and grains. I mentioned rice with enhanced vitamin A and iron to reduce child blindness. Vaccines are built into crops, fruits and vegetables. We have increased productivity from the world's farmers. This is necessary to meet the nutrition needs of the world's growing population.

We also are looking for rapid reforestation of areas that have either been logged or destroyed through natural means. We need to restore those forests. There is conversion of organic wastes into biofuels. There is also better, more efficient use of the world's scarce arable land.

These tremendous advancements that are available and the potential benefits to mankind will not come about if we scare the consumer from consuming the very products both on the health care side and the food side to the point where the research companies will no longer invest in research. I take the stand quite clearly that if the product, the vaccine, the treatment for AIDS or cancer or the food that we consume has been checked out by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and it has been scientifically proven to be safe within acceptable risk limits, then we should purchase those products as a society and use them. That gives the companies the incentive to continue their research. If we do not do that they will pull back their horns and we will not have these great advancements.

*Supply*

• (1535)

I am told it takes at least seven years of testing before new plant varieties are given a Canadian licence. When I hear groups like the Sierra Club, Greenpeace or the Council of Canadians pooh-poohing and going against the idea that GMO foods can be good, I question their motives and where they are coming from when they make statements which are not based on scientific evidence.

The other day I met with two young women from the Sierra Club who were very nice and pleasant. As our debate and discussion went on in my office, I asked them who was going to pay for the segregation and the added costs of mandatory labelling. They were quite serious and were not being flippant but their answer was that the big company Monsanto would pay. I said that in the real world that was not the way it worked. The farmer, the lowest level, will pay. He cannot dictate his costs to anybody else. He has to stay in business. He cannot start and stop a farm easily. The reasoning by some of the objectors to genetically modified foods does not stand up to common sense.

I also wonder about fellows like David Suzuki who is really a media personality although it says on his resume that he has a bit of a background in genetics. When he makes his arguments how many times does he actually come up with scientific evidence and research or points out that it is accepted by the scientific community? It is more a case of generalizations and assumptions which are not backed up by scientific fact whatsoever. Being media personalities, I know these fellows and women are paid big salaries, in the millions of dollars, including endorsements and that. In Mr. Suzuki's case, I wonder if he has some investments in the non-GMO companies and he thinks it would help them along if we could kill off the GMO industry. We have to look at the background on this.

Some people have called for absolute scientific guarantees that GMOs will not have any negative long term impact. In any endeavour this is an impossible measure to meet. Had this standard been in place, we never would have had the light bulb. We would have avoided the industrial revolution and we would still likely be debating the benefits and perils of fire.

If governments listened to these radical lobby groups, they could significantly slow or even stop essential research. It is not their direct influence that counts; it is their scare and fearmongering toward individual consumers and users of these products that hurts research and development.

In 1969 the House of Commons, except for the Reform Party and the Canadian Alliance Party which were not here, said that it was going to eliminate or drastically reduce child poverty. Child poverty has actually increased. What would the low income earners and children who are considered to be in poverty say if the government and parliament required mandatory labelling? It would

drive up the price of food and they would have to pay for that at the grocery store.

We have to make things better for people and for children who live in poverty. One way is to continue to provide them with cheap, reliable and safe food. The basic necessity for food has to be the primary consideration for all the population as opposed to some idea that mandatory labelling would be nice to have and would help some industry group which is lobbying for it.

• (1540)

Any decisions must be based on sound science and not on political interference. All new food products must be tested by Health Canada scientists to determine if the new food is safe for Canadian consumers. We have heard about allergenic considerations. It is my understanding that we test for allergenic properties in food and if they are present, the food is labelled. That is another red herring which has been brought up by other parties.

Any food that has a demonstrated health risk cannot be released into the Canadian market. It has been that way for years. Any food that could generate an allergic reaction must be labelled. All regulatory decisions must be based upon clear independent scientific information and not just public opinion.

Canadian consumers have lost confidence in the scientific testing process overseen by Health Canada in some instances. The BST issue with the dairy cattle was one example. As a result we have seen political interference and loss of confidence in that issue. It is the federal government that has really contributed to that. I blame the Liberal government we have had since 1993 for not being ahead on this issue and making sure that consumers were informed and ready for the future, for the changes that were coming that are for the benefit of all of us.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. H el ene Alarie (Louis-H ebert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the speech by my colleague and I am a bit disappointed by his position. He is well aware of the issue, since we talked about it several times at the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food.

When he talks about fearmongering groups, I can tell him that it is also a frightening idea to let the farmers alone bear the burden of all that will happen.

How can the companies wash their hands of all this? How can the government leave all the responsibility for this to the farmers? This is not how I see events unfolding.

It is embarrassing to hear the member talk about the poor children, when groups of Canadian bishops, of American bishops and ecumenical groups are studying the question and are asking for

mandatory labelling both in Canada and the United States. If ever there were people concerned about poor children, they are surely the ones.

However, I want to get back to the producers. I have heard it said that farmers producing non genetically modified foods will simply have to find their own market. Because my colleague comes from western Canada, I must say that in Saskatchewan, Mr. Hyden, an organic farmer, is losing customers because his neighbours are growing genetically modified foods. The seeds are blown into his fields or carried there by the birds and the bees, and when he applies for approval of his products, he gets a poor rating at the international level.

What can the member propose as a solution to those organic farmers who want to stay with traditional farming but are surrounded by genetically modified crops and lose their own market because of that? Last fall, in spite of all the problems they had in western Canada, organic farmers kept their market and fared better than the others.

[English]

**Mr. Howard Hilstrom:** Mr. Speaker, certainly I support the Bloc member for Louis-Hébert in her motion which we adopted at the agriculture committee to look into all of the aspects of genetically modified organisms as it pertained to the agriculture industry.

I think the answer to some of the questions that are being posed in the House today will be answered by the experts. I would hope Mr. Hayden will be one of the presenters who will give us the scientific evidence he has that the products that he is producing were contaminated by GMOs, to whom he was trying to sell them and how they determined there was GMO content in the food that he was selling. I think we will have very good hearings on the GMO issue. The question of food costs to not only low income people but to all Canadians is one of great importance. I also welcome any studies done by ecumenical church groups on this issue and invite their input when we hold our hearings.

• (1545)

**Mr. Alex Shepherd (Durham, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to enter into the debate on genetically modified organisms. As I walked into the Commons today, somebody offered flowers signifying cancer research. I would note that cancer research is another area where we actually use genetically modified organisms to solve some of the real problems of our health care system.

I do not think there are too many people here today who would argue against finding a cure for cancer. Similarly, I do not believe there are too many people here who would argue against finding better ways to produce agricultural substances and doing that in a healthful way.

### Supply

The reality is that the debate is somewhat skewed. The fact that people do not like genetically modified organisms is not so much that GMOs exist but rather the process undertaken to create GMOs. This to me is essentially what is wrong with this debate.

Our primary concern and the primary concern of Health Canada is that the food we consume is safe, not the process that was undertaken to create it. It is analogous to the production of steel. If manufacturers were to buy steel for their automobile production facilities, their concern would be whether the steel was suitable for producing an automobile, not about the actual process that created the steel. This is part of the labelling process.

It seems to me that what people want to say—

[Translation]

**Ms. Hélène Alarie:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The debate is important and I would like the members to speak to the motion. The hon. member is going on about steel, cancer and all kinds of things. These too are very legitimate concerns, but as the motion is rather precise and we are short of time, I would like us to stick to the subject.

[English]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland):** I will pay much closer attention.

**Mr. Alex Shepherd:** Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member cannot understand the importance of the differences in processes, genetically modified organisms being a process similar to a steel-like process, I am sorry but I cannot help her with that.

As I was saying, we live in very exciting times. I farmed for about eight years in another part of my life, which I enjoyed very much. I was very aware of the concerns of not only consumers but producers and people who worked in the agricultural sector about the use of pesticides, herbicides and so forth in farming.

For our farm communities, genetic modification is not new. I can recall someone coming into my office one day and presenting me with a cob of corn that was only five inches long. That was the average length cob of corn that existed approximately 30 years ago. We are consuming genetically modified foods every day.

• (1550)

In the riding I represent, we have built a huge industry in the breeding of Holstein cattle. We have used artificial insemination. We have used the superflushing of cows for embryo transplants. This has been very successful for the last 20 or 30 years. The basic cow in our area is the Holstein-Friesian. Durham has been so successful in producing purebred Holstein-Friesian animals that we now actually ship them back to Holstein and Friesland where they are used in genetic stock.

*Supply*

I come to this debate with some interest in the whole area of genetic modification. As I mentioned, farmers have been using this for some time. Just look at the great benefits that exist in genetic modification. As hon. members know, Canada is a threatened country when it comes to its climate. The growing season is very short, but with the use of genetic modification we have been able to shorten the growing time for many crops. That has not affected the quality of the end product. It has increased the ability of some Saskatchewan and prairie farmers to effectively compete on the world market. That has done nothing but good and we will continue to do that.

In my area, for instance, people are using genetic modification in apples to thwart blight. In other words, we can actually get the product off the trees and into the supermarkets faster, better and more efficiently and it is a healthier food.

The great assumption is that genetic manipulation is somehow bad. The fact is that we have been able to reduce disease and pestilence in our food supplies to the betterment of the consumer. The consumer is far better off with these genetic changes.

Needless to say, we cannot have a situation where that kind of experimentation gets out of hand. We cannot have a situation where the mutant organisms are allowed to cross-pollinate and possibly cause dangerous mutations. There is a great deal of work that goes on, not only in Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada but also in Health Canada, to ensure that sort of cross-pollination does not occur.

I had the benefit of being in British Columbia where we were experimenting with that sort of genetic manipulation. What we are attempting to do in Canada is to reduce the infestation of our softwood lumber in British Columbia to improve forestry stocks. This is another way of genetically using the science available to us to have better products.

When I talked to the science community, I asked them what was up in the real world of science and forestry. They talked about some of the research going on in Weyerhaeuser in the United States which is using genetics to build a faster growing tree with fewer branches and therefore more efficient when harvested. It causes less pressure on existing forestry and our conservation program is protected because of the abundant source of softwood lumber being grown commercially. These are all positive ways in which the economy can co-exist with the concerns of environmentalists, which is what I fancy myself to be.

There are of course limitations to genetic manipulation. Most of us have read recently about the cloning of cows and sheep. There is certainly a moral argument that goes along with this whole file. I will not get into that issue today because I know the Bloc member wants to talk about relevance and genetic modification. However, there is no question that most members of the public today are concerned about cloning and some of the moral issues that revolve

around that. That is not a part of my speech today but I am sure there are limitations to the amount of genetic manipulation that we should engage in. I know our government has a concern about regenerative technology and has studied it to the point of possibly passing legislation on the use of that kind of technology.

• (1555)

The Department of Health, under the food and drug administration, requires any food process that has been altered or has changed its nutritional value to be labelled. We have a labelling system already in Canada. The Bloc members would like us to think that we have a laissez-faire attitude toward labelling, but that is not the case.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency is another agency that has as its primary purpose to ensure that the food we eat is safe and consumable. The government supports the efforts of the Canadian Council of Grocery Distributors and the Canadian General Standards Board, which are entering into the process of people coming forward and voluntarily labelling their products.

A lot of the concern about genetic manipulation seems to be generating, to some extent, out of Europe. The European Union, which I had the advantage of being in about two weeks ago, in using its precautionary principle in trade, is using a lot of these areas, not for the protection of their own populations but rather to embargo Canadian imports. It is embargoing Canadian beef into the European Union. It is embargoing wine into the European Union. It is embargoing many of our agricultural products. I really question whether the European Union is a free trade area or an anti-free trade area because it does not want to trade with anyone other than the people who live within the European Union.

It is important that we not let that kind of fear take over our communities. One of the other speakers mentioned the increase in populations around the world. This is a great opportunity for Canadian agriculture. There is no question that southeast Asia and China will unlikely be able to continue feeding their populations.

We have not only an opportunity but an obligation to meet the challenges in the world definition of countries being able to feed themselves. We have an obligation to continue with a science-based approach to agriculture to ensure that our food products are the best in the world and that we can increase the amount of production.

Canadian farmers have led that challenge. Canadian farmers have been at the forefront. We now ship close to over \$2 billion worth of agricultural products around the world. We have been successful in those things because we have been willing to embrace, accept and use change and new processes to make our products safe for Canadians and everyone in the world.

I do not have to tell members that the need for protein by different countries is increasing at an alarming rate. There is no

question that these countries will be depending more and more on Canadian production.

I once had the advantage of visiting Taiwan. I was impressed. I had just arrived at the Taipei airport when someone asked me how the biological industry was doing in Saskatoon. I must admit that at that time I was not fully up to speed about the tremendous experimentation and results of our own scientists in Canada who have made such a huge contribution to biotechnology.

A simple thing, like the ability of plants to absorb nutrients, such as phosphates and nitrogen, from the soil is done imperfectly. There are now ways to inoculate seed so that the seed actually assists the plant. The plant will absorb more phosphates and more nitrogen than it did previously. Why is this important? It is important because farmers will now need less fertilizer to grow their crops. It will create less degradation of their environment because they can grow crops more efficiently.

• (1600)

Some of the things the Bloc members are talking about, some of what they believe the organic farm is doing, biological technology is allowing other farmers to also do that. This is a tremendous accomplishment for Canadians. Being the size of country that we are, we have become world leaders in the whole area of biotechnology.

It is time not only for politicians but for the science community itself to get out there and tell their message. A lot of people in this country, in the European Union and others are saying no, it is a terrible thing and that people are going to be born with three legs and four eyes because this stuff has been genetically altered.

I was in England not long ago and talking to the science and technology committee. They have had lots of problems with this issue politically. People are concerned about genetically altered food. They did a study on the media and what the responsibility is of the media in their country to inform people about the basic importance of the foods they eat. They discovered in the articles and the newspapers where people are talking about this issue that less than 15% of the writers in any of the newspapers had any background in science. In other words, the people who are spreading the stories about biotechnology are not scientists. They are people who are using most of their information as innuendo and things that are totally unsubstantiated by the science community.

The bottom line is we have to provide more responsible debate on the whole issue. There has been too much emotion and not enough science. There has been too much concern that somehow someone is manipulating our food supply and not enough thought process about the potential benefits not only for Canadians but for our ability as a country to feed the world.

### *Supply*

I would like to end on that note. I probably have not used up all my time but that is not necessary. All I can say is I certainly defend the importance of using genetic manipulation but within the obvious context to ensure that our food is safe. I believe that is happening. We can do more. We are going to do more. People are demanding that we do more. Clearly our health department and our department of agriculture are very focused on the area to ensure that Canadians are consuming safe food but at the same time to unleash our ability to do even better in the future.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am going to share my time with the hon. member for Sherbrooke.

I am very happy to speak to the motion from my colleague from Louis-Hébert which says:

That this House urge the government to demonstrate openness with regard to genetically modified organisms, starting by making it mandatory to label genetically modified foods or foods containing genetically modified ingredients, in order to enable Canadians to make informed choices about the foods they eat.

The debate on genetic engineering has been going on for some years, mainly because the development of cloning techniques was widely reported in the media. In recent months, the public learned that genetic engineering has been extended to the food industry and that, for some years now, much of the food that ends up on our table is genetically modified, this without the public having been informed or consulted.

This raises several questions: Why are plants and foods genetically modified? Who is benefiting from that? What are the benefits to consumers? What are the effects of GMOs on health and the environment? What are the challenges for agriculture and the environment? What are the economic and trade issues? What are the social repercussions of the GMOs? What are the regulations on GMOs? And what is the position of the federal government on GMOs?

• (1605)

There are many questions, and I think it is only natural to ask ourselves such questions, because right now we do not know what we are eating.

Thanks to the hon. member for Louis-Hébert, we have the opportunity today to discuss those issues and to offer answers to the legitimate questions of the public. I hope to have time to provide a chronology of the speeches made by my Bloc Québécois colleague, the hon. member for Louis-Hébert, on the GMO issue. It took her one year of hard work to finally get the chairman of the agriculture committee to agree to undertake a study on the labelling of GMOs. I congratulate my colleague on this.

What are the effects of GMOs on health? According to Health Canada, transgenic foods are not dangerous in the short term.

*Supply*

However, there is no study on their long term effects on human health. In order to approve a transgenic product, the federal government relies on studies conducted by the companies, which it merely reviews. While the approval of new drugs may take years of in-depth study and testing, that of transgenic foods takes just a few weeks.

The federal deputy minister of health himself, speaking before a Senate committee in the spring of 1999, recognized that, at the time, the government did not have any expertise whatsoever in genetics. As he put it, "its labs are not really up to it". How can the government guarantee the safety of these foods without adequate expertise and independent scientific studies? How can the government say that transgenic foods are not dangerous in the short term? There is currently no analysis being done.

It is also said that, because of a shortage of personnel at the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, there are major shortcomings, particularly in the area of research on transgenic foods.

On September 30, 1999, 200 federal experts on food quality and safety wrote to the Minister of Health. Their letter underscored the fact that the Agency is in a conflict of interest position as it must, on the one hand, ensure that foods are harmless, while on the other hand encourage food production and export.

GMO lobbyists are very powerful. They often win over our ministers and this government because they are using GMOs for partisan purposes.

Allow me to say, because people must know, that these lobbyists often interfere, but not always to promote the health of the public. They often do for partisan purposes. Considering their contributions to election campaigns, the government prefers to ignore some situations, particularly in research on transgenic foods. Let us not delude ourselves. There is big money in GMOs. We all know what money can do. But it is often to the detriment of the public.

These federal experts wrote to the Minister of Health that they were in a conflict of interest situation. It was not an easy decision for these 200 federal government scientists to abandon their usual reserve and sign their names to such a letter, thus endangering their jobs. They were so concerned that they felt they had to speak out. These are career scientists; they know what they are talking about.

● (1610)

Here is what they say: "We are not testing these products ourselves. Not a single researcher in Health Canada has been assigned to genetically modified foods, because we do not have the financial resources for that kind of work, a scientist said". Yet, these products end up on our tables. No study has been done to date, yet Health Canada states that there is no danger.

There are also concerns about food allergies. Why is it that more and more people, and especially children, have food allergies? Could it be because of the nature of what we eat? For the time being, we cannot answer this question, because there have been no studies. But there are food allergy problems.

There are also concerns about resistance to the antibiotics present in certain GMOs, because GMOs are spread in the natural environment. The EU scientific steering committee has recommended that antibiotic genes in genetically modified plants be removed because of the dangers of antimicrobial resistance for health.

Proponents of GMOs are not short of arguments. Let me go through a few and comment on them. They say that GMOs will make it possible to feed an increasing world population, in particular in developing countries. There is no shortage of food around the world; in fact, there is an overproduction. There is, however, a problem of distribution, among other things, because developing countries do not have the means to buy food produced in developed countries.

Developing countries use vast agricultural lands for primary crops, like coffee, cocoa, cotton and flax, which they sell to industrialized countries instead of using them to feed their own populations. So, these lands offer an opportunity. It is still possible to increase the yields in these countries through traditional techniques and financial support. It is worth mentioning that this government has reduced its international assistance budget.

Proponents of GMOs contend that there is no proof that those organisms represent a health risk. They may be right, but the absence of studies on the long term impact of GMOs on human and animal health as well as on plant and animal life does not prove that they are not dangerous. Yet, food containing GMOs have been sold for the last five years and the production of 42 genetically modified plants is authorised in Canada.

David Suzuki, a renowned broadcaster with a background in genetics, once said that politicians who say that GMOs are not dangerous are either liars or idiots. Countries in the European Union advocate the precautionary principle according to which, in the absence of scientific evidence, caution must be exercised to prevent potential damages from GMOs to the health and the environment.

Proponents contend that all genetically modified foods are tested in Canada. Actually, GMOs are not systematically tested. The government relies on companies who produce GMOs and simply reads their studies without any further assessment. It should be noted that new drugs are approved after long studies conducted over several years, sometimes up to ten years. This reduces risks while not eliminating them completely. GMOs used for agriculture and food production are approved very quickly, within 60 to 90 days, without any in-depth study or second assessment.



We are being told by some people that we are currently eating food containing GMOs and that there is no cause for concern. No study has been done. This is the reason why we call at least for the mandatory labelling of GMOs, so that people can choose what they want to eat.

**Hon. Gilbert Normand (Secretary of State (Science, Research and Development), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to qualify what the hon. member just said on the government's position on GMOs.

• (1615)

My colleagues from agriculture and health never said that GMOs were totally without danger. The role of the government is to protect Canadian citizens. Our protection agencies do the best they can based on the knowledge currently available.

We also know that some countries which adopted regulations on voluntary or mandatory labelling some months ago are now forced to back down because they do not have the technical and scientific means nor the necessary financial resources to implement these regulations.

I think that the whole GMO issue is being overdramatized. I do not want to stand up for GMOs as such. It is biotechnology. The role of the government is to control risks associated with GMOs as with, for example, drugs or public transportation, like planes. When the government issues a licence authorizing a plane to fly, it is clear that it cannot guarantee that that plane will never crash, but at least the risks are weighed. It is the same thing with drugs.

As for GMOs, the government is doing a great job of protecting the public. We have set up a committee of experts who will make recommendations on labelling to the government. We are also looking at what is being done in other countries.

I personally met with officials from other countries such as Australia and New Zealand, where labelling is currently impossible for scientific and financial reasons.

I ask my colleagues not to be alarmists. Yes, there may be risks, but the government is there to control them.

**Mrs. Pauline Picard:** First, Mr. Speaker, I would like the hon. member to name the countries that backed down, because it is the first thing I hear about this.

Secondly, I do not think that the Bloc Québécois is fear mongering. We just want the people to know what they are eating. I think it is a very basic proposal to ask that Canadians and Quebecers be told that the food on their plates contains GMOs.

### *Supply*

In addition, scientists at Health Canada denounced a number of things. A research scientist with the department told us that no research was being conducted at Health Canada and no researcher had been assigned to transgenic foods, because there is no money for that kind of research. This is not the Bloc Québécois that is saying this, but a research scientist with Health Canada.

I am concerned and the people I represent are concerned as well. I just held a press conference on this issue with the member for Louis-Hébert. The people in the riding of Drummond have reacted and they too are concerned about the lack of money for research on transgenic foods. So do not tell me that I am alarmist.

I want to straighten out another fact. Time permitting, I would have liked to provide a chronology of the speeches made on behalf of the Bloc Québécois by my colleague, the hon. member for Louis-Hébert. It took her one year of tireless work. I could mention those made on May 14, June 11, and so on. I have that list. It took the hon. member one year of tireless work, of questions and comments. It took a great deal of patience on her part to get the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food to agree to study the labelling of transgenic foods.

When someone talks to me about the goodwill shown by this government, give me a break.

**Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am sure you have noticed the difficulty I have in containing my joy in addressing 301 genetically modifiable organisms this afternoon.

I will begin my speech with a question. Are you sure, Mr. Speaker, that you have not eaten any genetically modified organisms today? If you are one of those who do not care, the question is irrelevant.

• (1620)

However, if you are one of those who wonder about the appropriateness of such a process, you want to know what you eat, you want to be free not to eat certain foods and you want to know the short, medium and long term effects of GMOs on health, agriculture and the environment. This raises many questions.

The Bloc Québécois has taken a clear stance on the issue. We are not systematically against GMOs but are against the fact that labelling is not mandatory. As a matter of fact, my colleague from Louis-Hébert, who is our party's agriculture and agri-food critic, has succeeded in getting the House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-food to study the issue, and I congratulate her for that.

This study will begin on May 16 et will continue until the summer recess and perhaps even until the fall, in co-operation with the three other opposition parties and, I hope, all Liberal members

*Supply*

of goodwill. We also want to invite the scientists who will assess the potential risks of GMOs, members of the public, farmers, particularly organic farmers, and consumers to give their input.

The study of GMOs will allow us to analyse the consequences of labelling on international trade, to know the advantages and disadvantages of GMOs for agriculture as well as the long term effect of GMOs on human health and the environment.

On November 4 of last year, my colleague from Louis-Hébert introduced Bill C-309 on mandatory labelling. We learned a few weeks ago that Europe has gone ahead and decreed that from now on all products containing GMOs should be labelled as such. This is a first victory for consumers. This step taken in Europe should make it easier for us here.

We are not content with taking action only in the House, we, in the Bloc Québécois, have started a petition on labelling, which so far has been signed by 44,000 to 45,000 people across Quebec.

My office prepared and mailed leaflets on this topic to my constituents. They were asked to answer two questions. The first one was "Do you believe the general public is properly informed about GMOs?" The second one was "Do you believe it is justified to demand that genetically modified foods be labelled?"

Here are a few of the comments my office has received so far. On the first question as to whether the public is properly informed about GMOs, here are some of the answers and general comments: "Not at all. Governments have no regard for the public". Or "No, there is not enough outreach, especially regarding health impacts". And again "No, people are just starting to realize how huge this problem is. Quality and health risks are only the tip of the iceberg".

Another one says "No, we only receive very vague information, often by word of mouth". And a last one "No, I heard about it for the first time in the fall of 1999 in my microbiology course, and I study animal health". As you may suspect, the answer was no 99.9% of the time.

• (1625)

On the second question as to whether it is justified to demand that genetically modified foods be labelled, an overwhelming majority said yes. Again, here are their comments. "The right to know is fundamental. Labelling should be mandatory. It should be mandatory so we can make an informed decision".

Here is another comment. "If we cannot stop companies from producing GMOs, we should at least know what products contain them". Another citizen said "I am totally outraged to see that companies could force us to eat whatever they want to put in their products".

Another comment says—and I have many, but I will not read them all, only a few more—that "Labelling should be mandatory,

especially if our lives are at risk. There might be more cancer or other illnesses that destroy our very fragile cells". Another citizen wrote "I would like to have the freedom to know what I put in my body". A last comment states "We are given the list of ingredients that are contained in food products. It is quite normal that I should know also if they contain GMOs".

People are very concerned about this issue and support the mandatory labelling of food products containing GMOs. They said so in a Léger & Léger poll published last month. According to the poll, 50% of Quebecers surveyed are concerned about GMOs, and three people out of four would prefer a tomato without GMOs, even at a higher price, to a tomato with GMOs that were 30% cheaper. A proportion of 68% of the Quebecers polled would prefer a tomato a little bruised or damaged without GMOs to a more beautiful and redder tomato containing GMOs.

As for the Canadian government, I cannot remain silent about a brochure that I consider to be misinformation on food and also on GMOs. This brochure, entitled "Food Safety and You", which the federal government sent to many households during the week of March 27, talks about the benefits of GMOs, stating that they may reduce the need for chemicals in agriculture. It also states that they are as safe as foods already on the Canadian market.

How can the federal government say such a thing when we know that genetically modified foods are not tested and inspected differently from other food products? Researchers do not do a second assessment of GMOs, but simply read the research protocol provided by companies seeking approval for their products.

In the brochure, there is nothing about the fact that no studies have been conducted on the medium and long term impact of GMOs on health. We cannot just tell the people that genetically modified foods are good for them without answering legitimate questions about the possible risks of the GMOs for human health and the environment.

Furthermore, the federal government, through the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, has awarded a contract for more than \$300,000 to Telemedia Communications, in Toronto, to have *Canadian Living* and *Coup de pousse* magazines insert a special section in their June issue to reaffirm the security of GMOs.

While the federal government is financing advertising campaigns with taxpayers' money, Health Canada and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency have no money to conduct real studies on the long and medium term impacts of GMOs.

Many questions remain unanswered. This new technology was introduced very quickly under pressure from a few herbicide and seed companies.

*Supply*

• (1630)

Therefore, it is important to be cautious and to hold a public debate on GMOs so that the public can be well informed about the issue.

If you do not know what a genetically modified organism looks like, you can get an idea just by looking at my colleagues on the other side. They are politically modified organisms.

**Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Sherbrooke for his excellent presentation. I would like to ask him a few questions concerning genetically modified foods.

Why do we genetically modify plants and foods? Who benefits from that and what are the benefits to consumers?

**Mr. Serge Cardin:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Drummond for her question, to which I will answer in a different way.

Last month, I attended a seminar of the Association des biologistes du Québec. I had the chance to participate in a session where people were asking themselves very serious questions.

They had a number of concerns. Of course, some made speeches, saying “A certain balance exists in nature”. Thousands of years were needed for organisms to develop genetically and for a balance that I would describe as a delicate balance to be achieved.

People were wondering about the impacts this will have on our food chain. Incorporating herbicides into genes will eliminate certain mosquitoes and many other things. They were wondering about human intervention in genetics.

They were concerned primarily with ethics. They were wondering how far this will go. Earlier, a colleague from the other side said “We have a tree and we modify it genetically because we believe it has too many branches or does not provide enough shade”. All reasons are good. One must wonder where it will stop.

Food is now the issue, and then it will be animals. As a matter of fact, it would seem that it is already the case. Some day, in the name of the sacrosanct development of science and technology, it will probably be human beings who will be modified.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot see the colour of your eyes but if, according to the government, they are of the wrong colour, will they be genetically modified? I am wondering. Ethics is important.

Someone said that organic food producers took their faith in their own hands. Labelling is not a constraint, it amounts to marketing. People have adopted internal regulations concerning the

labelling of organic foods, in order to promote their sale and support those who buy them.

What is true for organic foods is also true for genetically modified foods. Some people do not want to eat them. We should inform them. It is more than a mere marketing decision. With regard to genetically modified foods, there is a requirement to let the people decide whether they want such foods or not.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland):** 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 Acadie—Bathurst, Gasoline Prices; the hon. member for Halifax West, Foreign Affairs; the hon. member for Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, National Parks; the hon. member for Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore, Fisheries; the hon. member for Lethbridge, Human Resources Development.

• (1635)

[English]

**Mr. Dennis J. Mills (Broadview—Greenwood, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will reread the opposition motion to the House:

That this House urge the government to demonstrate openness with regard to genetically modified organisms, starting by making it mandatory to label genetically modified foods or foods containing genetically modified ingredients, in order to enable Canadians to make informed choices about the foods they eat.

I compliment the Bloc member for putting forward the motion today. I totally support the system in the Department of Health today for making sure that the quality and safety of our food supply is under control, but I believe it is the responsibility of the House to have a deep and thorough review because of the rapid rate with which people are experimenting and working with altering our food products.

Most of us are not that sensitive to the whole genetically modified organism system involved with our food. Over the last few months I have been using a lot of my parliamentary time as a Toronto member looking at our whole food chain system. It is absolutely amazing the number of urban or city people who have never taken the time to get their heads around the food chain.

When we walk into a supermarket in downtown Toronto it is amazing how much food we see. The quality of the food and its prices are so consumer friendly, every aspect of it, that we just do not realize what is going on behind it. We do not get into the whole area of food processing and what is happening there. Very few of us who live in cities go back to the contribution farmers are making, which is ultimately the area we must all begin taking a closer look at.

Even before we get to genetically modified or altered foods, we in urban Canada should be aware that most studies will show that if

*Supply*

we do not become engaged in this food chain there could be a danger two years from now that we will lose close to 80,000 family farms.

This issue deserves long hours of debate and long hours of analysis. The Bloc is doing a good thing by putting this motion on the floor of the House of Commons. At the same time we must realize and reinforce for consumers that the system out there right now is not without control. The products on the shelves in stores today have been reviewed by Health Canada and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. Let us not send a sense of alarm into the community today because that is not the way to advance this debate.

• (1640)

The House has to go right back to the producer of food. The men and women who have spent their lives producing food are the ones who are best equipped and have the know-how. They can inform us in an enlightened and experienced way on whether or not they feel the food processing system ultimately ending up at the retailer needs the type of specific recommendation of mandatory labelling that is proposed in the motion.

The whole labelling system needs to be reviewed, not just in terms of the notion of genetically modified foods but also the whole area of foods produced in Canada, specifically family farm foods. The percentage that most farmers receive, outside the ones protected by supply management, is something that needs review as well.

Over the last couple of months my experience with consumers suggests that if they knew they were purchasing products which came from Canadian family farms and that there was some type of royalty system, they would not mind an extra two or three cents on particular products, whether it be a loaf of bread, a jar of jam or a box of cereal. I believe they would participate in something like that to help family farms maintain their viability and sustainability. That has been my experience in testing the idea in a very unscientific way over the last couple of months.

When we get into the business of looking at labelling we have to do it in a most comprehensive way. I do not think we should just look at genetically modified food. We have to go deeper and look into where the food is coming from, be specific to Canadian farms and make sure that we use the process of identifying the quality, safety and source of our food as a means of rebuilding and renewing the commitment our country should have to sustaining the family farm.

Most consumers would hate to see a day when they suddenly woke up and it was decided that our food dependency should be from imports rather than from our domestic supply. A good friend of mine, Paddy Carson, once said, and he actually repeats it often, that a nation which cannot feed itself will feed upon itself. The whole realm of rebuilding our agricultural foundation is something

we must become seized with over the next few months as we work away in this Chamber.

I am totally supportive of the general thrust of the motion on the floor of the House of Commons today. However, I would also like to bundle it into a more comprehensive approach where every food product from a family farm is recognized in terms of its quality. We could also figure out a royalty system when consumers choose to buy products identified as Canadian family farm products. With that economic stability and predictability when the quality and long term security of supply will be maintained.

I appreciate having participated in the debate, but I would say that it should be bundled up into a more comprehensive labelling program.

• (1645)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. H el ene Alarie (Louis-H ebert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague's proposal with great interest because it goes even further than what I have suggested.

He talks about the traceability of foods and, there again, we have a lot of catching up to do with Europe. I think that what he is proposing is ideal.

I was only involved in one aspect of this great project, but it would really be great if we went all the way, because we would be protecting both consumers and farmers.

What worries me is the fact GMOs have been on the market for five years. We started talking about this a year or so ago and, in the meantime, things have continued to happen.

I see the Minister of Industry. There is the biotechnology advisory committee, which was set up in September 1999, and there is also a committee on the future of biotechnology made up of scientific experts who will look at what is going to happen in the next ten years.

I want it to be very clear that I am not against setting up such committees because looking at the future is already something. What really bothers me, however, is the present. I have a problem with the present.

I reviewed a study by Ann Clark, a professor at Guelph University. She carried out tests on toxicity levels or loads and found that 70% of the 42 MGO crops in Canada had not been tested for toxicity. She adds that allergenicity was not assessed in laboratory or through feeding experiments for any of the 42 crops.

I am not an alarmist, but a scientific approach requires that we have scientific answers to our questions.

Today, I have this question for my colleague: Does he think that a collective effort is in order to move ahead faster in answering these questions? We are eating these foods; they are already on the market. That is what worries me.

[*English*]

**Mr. Dennis J. Mills:** Mr. Speaker, I believe passionately that we should deal with this issue in a comprehensive way, and I think we should have done it yesterday.

We have a health care challenge in this country and one of the ways we will repair, rebuild, renew our health care system is by making sure that we focus on diet and nutrition. At the basis of that is food production. If we do not have our heads around the quality of food production and the impact of certain types of genetically modified foods it may have a disastrous effect on our capacity to renew our health care system. I see food and health as being inextricably intertwined.

I know that the Minister of Industry, who is in the House today, feels passionately about this issue. But as the member for Louis-Hébert mentioned, this is not just a health issue and it is not just an industry issue; it is everybody working together. I am confident that all of us in the House will deal with this. I think I can say on behalf of everyone in the House that we are all pretty sensitive about the food we eat.

• (1650)

**Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the member talked a bit about labelling products that are produced on Canadian farms so that Canadian consumers would know that. He feels there would be a willingness by the Canadian public to pay a little extra for that.

One reason our farm community is in trouble is low commodity prices, and those prices are being driven by subsidized products from around the world. It seems that every time the agriculture community wakes up in the morning there is a new challenge facing it. Fuel costs are up. The government announced that transportation rates are up for shipping grain off the prairies. The issue of species at risk legislation could affect agriculture producers, as well as the idea of controlling greenhouse gas emissions. These are all issues of concern to the agriculture community. To say that we would label food produced in Canada so that the consumer would pay a little more might come up against some opposition. There are a lot of consumers who cannot afford to pay any more for food. We would somehow have to do it in a way that would benefit all of society, the farmer at one end and the consumer at the other.

I want to be get back to the labelling. A lot of products are labelled “made in Canada” now. How in the member’s mind would

### *Supply*

something like that be structured to ensure that the benefit of such a program would return to the producer?

**Mr. Dennis J. Mills:** Mr. Speaker, I would not want to suggest the real specifics, the process or the technique. I do not have that in my mind, nor do I believe anyone else would today. We are debating today. However, I think that the concept of designing a system whereby Canadian family farm products would be identified in a way that the consumer would realize that a percentage of the product they purchase would return in a royalty format to the farm community has merit.

By the way, I would exclude from that those farmers who are part of supply management. As we know, most of those farmers are very well protected. I am not suggesting that we enhance that sector, I am thinking more of those farmers who are outside that realm.

I think we have to sit down to figure out a way to have a royalty system. We do it in other sectors of the economy. We do it with artists who perform. They get royalties for their work on top of their basic wage. They get a royalty, a bonus or a dividend. We do it in many other sectors. We do it in business. I do not see why we could not design a Canadian family farm dividend, which would really be nothing more than the consumer recognizing and realizing that they want to keep a secure, high quality farm system in this country.

We have a huge problem in urban Canada waking up certain consumers to the fact that the food supply which they see when they go into a Loblaws, a Knob Hill, a Sobeys or a Dominion might be in short supply a year from now from a Canadian source point of view. They have a difficult time imagining that.

I do not want the House to think this would be an easy sell, but our duty as members is not just to take the easy sells. Our duty is to take hold of an issue that we know is going to hit us between the eyes in 14 to 15 months, and we may have to go against the wind of certain consumers who may resist. We may have to tell them that they will have to do this in order to maintain that security of Canadian family farm supply. I for one would be happy to take up that challenge. Once we educate and inform them of what the long term benefits would be, in terms of health and everything else, most Canadians would buy in.

• (1655)

**Mr. David Price (Compton—Stanstead, PC):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to rise today to speak to the motion that this House urge the government to demonstrate openness with regard to genetically modified organisms, starting by making it mandatory to label genetically modified foods or foods containing genetically modified ingredients, in order to enable Canadians to make informed choices about the foods they eat. It is an excellent motion which the Progressive Conservative Party definitely supports. We

*Supply*

support the idea of much greater consumer awareness of genetically modified foods.

An estimated 60% of processed foods contain genetically modified ingredients. An Angus Reid poll recently found that Canadians would be less likely to buy food that they know is genetically modified. They get very nervous about it, which is understandable.

Much of what I will say has been said already today, but I think it bears repeating.

During the 1980s the PC government identified biotechnology as a key and strategic area of future economic prosperity and promise for Canada. During its mandate our government encouraged the creation of a strong biotechnology sector and provided funding for research and development that would allow every region to benefit. My region benefits from the Lennoxville research station, which does a lot of work on biotechnological products, particularly for the farming industry.

The challenge we must face in creating a solid and dynamic biotechnology industry is twofold. First, we must create a climate in which industry sectors can flourish both here and internationally. Second, we must meet the public's concern for a healthy environment and the safety of GMOs.

The Canadian Environmental Protection Act defines biotechnology as the application of science and engineering in the direct use of living organisms or products of living organisms in their natural or modified form.

Although much of the focus in the media has been on food products derived from biotechnology, there are also pharmaceutical, health and pest control issues. I should say in passing that we have seen many problems from these other products. Pest control products have been a big item as of late. People have been treating their lawns with them. That type of situation has caused many problems.

With respect to food products, biotechnology has the potential to increase the competitiveness of the Canadian agri-food industry by increasing individual competitiveness and by exporting high value agri-food products. It could also increase yields to compensate for the increase in world population. It could develop more sustainable agricultural practices by reducing the need for chemical weed and pest controls and by enabling the environmentally beneficial practice of no-till agriculture, reducing carbon dioxide emissions. It could create new markets by introducing value added products. It could improve nutrition and remove allergens from food crops.

Value passed on from the producer to the consumer can and is being done. It is possible to immunize a population by placing medications known as nutraceuticals or output traits, for example, in foods to lower cholesterol levels. It was reported recently that scientists in the U.S. have created a strain of genetically altered rice

to combat vitamin A deficiency, the world's leading cause of blindness.

• (1700 )

Canada is a world leader in biotechnology. If the government fails to give support in fostering this emerging technology, Canada's competitive advantage as a leader risks becoming a lost opportunity.

There are concerns. The principal concern is with the use of biotechnology in food products as a question of food security. There have been numerous reports mostly in Europe that have negatively impacted consumer confidence in Canada as a result of the claims made about food safety. There are concerns that there is not enough risk assessment work being done on consumer products derived from biotechnology in Canada. Most of these concerns have been raised by lobby groups such as Greenpeace, the Council of Canadians and the Canadian Health Coalition.

The federal government announced its support for a voluntary labelling project of foods derived from biotechnology on September 17, 1999. The Canadian Council of Grocery Distributors and the Canadian General Standards Board launched a project to help develop the standards for voluntary labelling that are meaningful and enforceable. There already exists a mandatory labelling policy for nutritional changes or safety concerns on food products.

On December 17, 1999 the ministers of health, agriculture and environment announced their intention to establish an independent expert panel, the Blue Ribbon Scientific Panel, to examine future scientific developments in biotechnology. The panel is expected to file a preliminary report in June and a final report by the end of the summer 2000. The Canadian Biotechnology Advisory Committee is also involved in the recommendation process.

In January the Government of Canada agreed to an international biosafety protocol that will allow countries to assess and regulate shipments of living modified organisms. A living modified organism is any living biological entity that possesses a novel combination of genetic material obtained through the use of modern biotechnology that is capable of transferring or replicating genetic material. Examples of products containing LMOs are pharmaceuticals, seeds for sowing, saplings, fish, seed for food, feed and processes.

The protocol is designed to ensure that the trade of LMOs do not have a negative impact on biodiversity and the world's ecosystems. The impacts of the protocol on agricultural exports are not fully known.

I can give an interesting example not in the food itself but in what I talked about before, in pest control for lawns and the dangers involved because things are not properly labelled. We have heard recently of many cases of people who are worried about having lawns sprayed and what happens to the neighbours. I have a

*Supply*

personal example. Lawns in my area had been sprayed and then cut. The cuttings gathered onto the street. After that small dogs in the neighbourhood which love to eat grass ate the grass. There ends up being a very heavy concentration and many animals have died as a result.

Consumers have clearly indicated they want to be informed through labelling about foods that have been altered. They favour foods that provide tangible benefits. An Angus Reid survey conducted in November and December last year found that two-thirds of the Canadian population would be less likely to buy food they know has been genetically modified. A study done for the governments of Australia and New Zealand in October 1999 suggests that mandatory labelling would raise food costs by 5% to 15%. The study states the requirements to label all foods which may contain GMOs is a very major undertaking for both industry and regulators. The simple part is the change of labels. A far more extensive process is needed to determine both GMO status for food ingredients and monitor their continuing status.

Mandatory labelling could also mean labelling 95% of all food in this country which is considered genetically modified in some way. This could provide unquestionable value to the customer.

Developing national guidelines and labelling must be done in conjunction with the development of standards at the international level, for example the Codex Alimentarius Commission which is the international standards setting body for food.

• (1705)

I want to encourage the member for Louis-Hébert to continue on her quest to get the government to follow through on this and take on the project of making sure that we get things labelled so that Canadian consumers can trust what they are picking up and what they are eating.

**Mr. Joe McGuire (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker and hon. members, it is a pleasure to say a few words on this very important topic.

Canada has an enviable reputation around the world for the safety of its food and the rigour of its food inspection system, including foods derived through biotechnology. If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, then Canada's food safety system is certainly one of the best in the world.

Regulation through sound science is an essential step in the continued safe production of biotechnology derived foods. The federal budget confirms this priority in Canada's regulatory system. The \$90 million investment in the regulatory system for biotechnology products will allow Health Canada, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, CFIA, and other regulatory departments to continue to enhance and involve its safety first regulatory

approach to keep pace with the next generation of scientific discoveries.

There are a number of science based organizations within the Canadian government that rely on leading edge science to carry out regulatory and other science based mandates. One of these is the Canadian Food Inspection Agency.

Budget 2000 targets regulation of biotechnology products as well as upgrading federal laboratory facilities. This funding includes approximately \$30 million directly to the CFIA for biotech regulation. What is this funding for? This funding will help the CFIA to increase its capacity for monitoring, for inspection, for testing and for enforcement; to meet human resource and technical needs to ensure CFIA staff have up to date expertise; to generate research and knowledge that will underpin regulation; and to strengthen international co-operation and harmonization on regulations.

Canada's science based regulatory system for agricultural products has been a major factor in contributing to the reputation of the safety and the quality of Canadian goods around the world. In order to maintain that reputation the government is dedicated to upholding the regulations that protect the health and safety of Canadians, of animals and of the environment. This is the government's first priority and to achieve that we must have regulation through sound science.

I am pleased to say that the budget confirms the priority of health and safety for Canada's regulatory system. The government believes that biotechnology derived products must go through the same stringent regulatory and approval processes as all other new foods.

The budget 2000 investment in the regulatory system for biotechnology products will allow Canada to continue to enhance and evolve the safety first regulatory approach. The continued dedication to supporting this regulatory system will mean the continued reputation of the safety of Canada's food supply.

Canada is committed to protecting human health, animal health and the environment. Our regulatory system is dedicated to maintaining the highest scientific standards. We continually strive to ensure that scientific advice is broadly based and that our assessments will keep pace with new scientific discoveries.

This commitment is reflected in the establishment of two important groups. An expert panel and an advisory committee have been set up at the request of the government. The Royal Society of Canada at the request of the government has appointed an expert panel to examine future scientific developments in food biotechnology and to provide advice to the federal government accordingly. This proactive, forward thinking body will advise Health Canada, the CFIA and Environment Canada on the science capacity the federal government will need to maintain the safety of our new foods derived through biotechnology into the 21st century.

*Supply*

• (1710)

In examining the leading edge of this technology, the panel will identify the possibility of new or different issues related to the safety of products of food biotechnology. It will suggest what new research, policies and regulatory capacity if any may be needed by the federal government to keep our standards of safety as high for the next generation of biotechnology derived foods as for what we have for the products approved today.

The Royal Society's panel consists of people who have widely recognized expertise in specific areas of knowledge. The panel is carefully balanced with respect to the various points of view on biotechnology issues.

Royal Society panels operate entirely independently of the agencies which request their reports, in this case the government. They also operate independent of the Royal Society itself. In short, Canadians can be assured that the Royal Society's expert panel will be balanced, fair and completely impartial.

There are a number of challenges and opportunities associated with biotechnology that require detailed consideration and public discussion. Food biotechnology presents Canadians with unprecedented challenges but also unprecedented opportunities.

The recently formed Canadian Biotechnology Advisory Committee, CBAC, will bring stakeholders and interested parties together to advise the government, to raise public awareness and to engage Canadians in an open and transparent dialogue on biotechnology issues. The CBAC will deal with tasks such as the issues surrounding regulation and stewardship of emerging applications of biotechnology with public education about biotechnology and the social, economic, environmental, legal and ethical issues related to food biotechnology. It will monitor scientific developments that underpin new developments in the field of biotechnology and the application of these new developments.

Canadians want to take part in the dialogue on food biotechnology. The CBAC will actively create opportunities for Canadians to participate in its activities and discussions. This will include an interactive website for interested Canadians to review, consult and provide input into the issue.

When this work is completed and the CBAC has also received the work of the Royal Society's expert panel, the CBAC will create an overarching report with recommendations to the government that will be informed by the work of the panel. The work of the Royal Society's expert panel and the CBAC will contribute to a balanced and consultative process where all concerns can be thoroughly considered. The government looks forward to the contributions that the expert panel and the CBAC will make to further the dialogue on biotechnology issues. This is an example of the government's commitment to the exchange of ideas and the issues surrounding biotechnology.

In addition to the expert panel and the CBAC, the scientists and specialists at the Canadian Food Inspection Agency as well as those at Health Canada all contribute to maintaining the safety of the food supply of Canada. They help to ensure that Canada's regulatory system remains science based, that the regulatory system is fair and transparent, and that Canada's food supply remains one of the safest in the world. That is money and effort well allocated and well spent.

[Translation]

**Ms. H el ene Alarie (Louis-H ebert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member talk about the regulatory process. I wish the members could understand that we are somehow questioning the regulatory process because we would like to go beyond what exists at present, beyond the equivalence principle. Of course, what we want is the security of our food.

While we are not alarmists, we are quite happy when committees are struck to advise the government. I do not wish, however, for too many committees, because things would get bogged down and everything would be put off.

Yes, we want our food to be safe, and we will go beyond what the regulatory process offers today.

• (1715)

[English]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland):** We are going to do things a little differently because I made a mistake. Debate does not end until 5.30 because this is a non-votable motion. Therefore, the hon. member for Egmont who is on his feet, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, has nine minutes in which to continue his dissertation. I had instructed that there was only two minutes.

If not, the hon. parliamentary secretary can take as long as he wants in responding to these questions, and then we will get to the member for L evis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudi ere if there is time.

**Mr. Joe McGuire:** Mr. Speaker, I will respond briefly to the hon. member's question. She says that she is not an alarmist and that is good news. There are a lot of alarmists around the world who are upsetting people unnecessarily when it comes to their comments on foods derived from biotechnology.

That is why the government is striking these panels, striking these advisory boards, getting as much information as possible and



going through rigorous testing to make sure that any new foods are subjected to rigorous regulation and investigation before we ever put them before the Canadian public as food.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, to begin with, I would like to congratulate my colleague from Louis-Hébert for having presented this motion to the House, which reads as follows:

That this House urge the government to demonstrate openness with regard to genetically modified organisms, starting by making it mandatory to label genetically modified foods or foods containing genetically modified ingredients, in order to enable Canadians to make informed choices about the foods they eat.

I have read this text over many times, particularly the first words “That this House urge the government to demonstrate openness—”

Why does the member for Louis-Hébert have to urge the government to demonstrate openness? We have all followed the debate that took place in the first few months of the year and that was orchestrated by the so-called Miami group, to which Canada and the United States belong and which is opposed to the food labelling.

Why all this opposition when European and Asian countries like Japan and Korea have already adopted such measures. If it is good for the Japanese and the Europeans, why would it not be good for Canadians and Quebecers to know what is in the products that they consume?

I commend the member for Louis-Hébert for bringing forward this debate in the House and also for having toured the province. She invited the members to accompany her. I was unable to attend the meeting held in my riding because of a death in the family, but I inquired about what had happened. I also listened to colleagues who talked about the various consultations that took place.

The member for Louis-Hébert did not only consult consumers. She also talked with producers and people from the industry. She held a balanced consultation process without bias or witch hunts.

Of course she has proposed food labelling and in a way was rather innovative in putting this issue up for debate in the House of Commons. However, it is a matter that concerned a lot of people in the country, at least in Quebec.

● (1720)

A while ago I asked her to how many signatures had been collected for the petitions on the labelling, not the banning of GMOs, and she said that between 45,000 and 50,000 signatures had been collected so far, only in Quebec. This means that a lot of people are worried. The issue is not necessarily being discussed

### *Supply*

every day, but occasionally, at the Montreal debate for example. It is therefore a public concern.

She probably gave out information when she was touring Quebec, because people came unsolicited to my riding office and said “I want to sign the petition”. They were well informed. Eight out of ten were mothers. They are more concerned about the food their children and their family eat. They probably care more than men, but I know that some men are also concerned.

We have seen that the majority of Liberal members have spoken out in opposition, although there were what I might call some heartening exceptions. The Liberal member who spoke before the last speaker went even further, asking that all products be labelled. We cannot object to this principle, but there are some natural products the contents of which we do not need to know because they have been around for so long, for hundreds of years, and they never made anyone sick. But GMO technology is rather new.

My father was a farmer. I am 52 years old today, and when I was a kid, I used to help him spray DDT on potato crops. It was not illegal then, and we did not use any protection or protective masks. DDT was used to protect the crop from insects, especially those called potato bugs.

Some time later, it was realized that DDT is extremely dangerous. As soon as they were made aware of this, farmers immediately discontinued this practice. Most farmers are responsible people. They do not want to harm people’s health or their own.

This morning, I sat on the environment committee for my colleague from Jonquière. The committee had a discussion on pesticides. We can see their impact and the concerns they raise. Members in the party opposite are deeply concerned about this.

There are many kinds of pesticides, of course. There is a certain analogy to be made with GMOs. Members from all parties were asking whether we have made all the studies we need.

To those who have described the hon. member for Louis-Hébert as a scaremonger, I would say that she is just being cautious. In matters of food and human health, caution should prevail. We should not scare people but we must show them that we need to be cautious. The principle of openness underpins democracy and we have a right to information. That is what the charter says.

If a principle is guaranteed in the charter, it must mean something. It must be adhered to. We cannot say, as the Liberal government does, that it would be too costly or that we would need more human resources.

● (1725)

In this regard, 200 food quality experts from the federal government wrote to the Minister of Health to let him know that because of a lack of personnel they could not make all of the required

*Private Members' Business*

analyses. This is the reality now, but, because of a lack of personnel, are we going to close our eyes, ignore the risks and prevent any check? This would be absurd.

I do not want to go too far, because I know that this is a word that is almost taboo in this House, but regarding hepatitis C and all the problems caused by the HIV tainted blood and so on, who would have thought at that time that such a thing could happen? The problem was acknowledged, because caution is always the best way to go. Of course, here, we are not talking about these kinds of issues, but there are people who are concerned.

The member for Louis-Hébert is not being alarmist, because I know that she is a great specialist in this area. She was the first woman to become an agrologist in Quebec. This is quite something. That dates her, but it is true. She was an assistant deputy minister in Quebec's Department of Agriculture. She was a member of the Commission de la protection du territoire agricole. Her father was a searcher in this area. So, I do not see how she can be embarrassed of my reminding her of it.

I have full confidence in her and I have known her for many years. When the hon. member for Louis-Hébert immerses herself in an issue like this, she takes it seriously and is very thorough. Indeed, she became some kind of an expert on GMOs for many people.

Personally, I am in favour of progress and I think that we must not necessarily reject GMOs because they have tremendous possibilities and many benefits.

If I rise today to speak to the issue, it is to protect the right to information of the public and to promote transparency. I think that those principles command that we put the efforts, the money, the resources, the research and the studies needed. We know that knowledge is important. For that reason, it is important to know all that needs to be known and not to let something as fundamental as food subject to arbitrary or hasty decisions.

We talked about food, but we could also talk about the risks for the environment. I am a farmer's son and I know that in some parts of the United States and elsewhere in the world, the soil has been overexploited. In the end, if proper care is not taken, the farming potential of the land can be affected. We cannot ask too much too rapidly from farm land without dire consequences. That applies to the use of fertilizers and other things. That is the risk I saw when I read the documentation on the issue.

At first sight we could think that it would be better to have bigger and faster growing fruits and vegetables. Of course there are clearly economic benefits, but I ask myself some questions. When the same companies, the same corporations, that extol the virtues of genetically modified organisms are selling pesticides, insecticides or chemical fertilizers, it is almost as if the doctor owned the drugstore.

In Quebec, there was a time when it was like that, but it is not allowed anymore. We are trying to avoid integration, because we do not want to put people in a conflict of interest because they are promoting one industry and trying to offset the effects of a phenomenon that they are benefiting from at the same time.

• (1730)

I congratulate the hon. member for Louis-Hébert who is speaking only of labelling, only of information. The public must know what they are eating.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland):** It being 5.30 p.m., it is my duty to inform the House that the time allowed for debate on the motion has now expired.

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## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

### WITNESS PROTECTION PROGRAM ACT

The House resumed from April 12 consideration of the motion that Bill C-223, an act to amend the Witness Protection Program Act and to make a related and consequential amendment to another act (protection of spouses whose life is in danger), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland):** Pursuant to order made on Wednesday, April 12, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-223 under Private Members' Business.

Call in the members.

• (1800)

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

(Division No. 1278)

YEAS

Members

Abbott  
Anders

Alarie  
Asselin

*Private Members' Business*

Bachand (Saint-Jean)  
 Bellehumeur  
 Bergeron  
 Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Pabok  
 Bigras  
 Borotsik  
 Breitzkreuz (Yorkton—Melville)  
 Brison  
 Cadman  
 Cardin  
 Casson  
 Chatters  
 Cummins  
 de Savoye  
 Desjarlais  
 Doyle  
 Dubé (Madawaska—Restigouche)  
 Duncan  
 Elley  
 Gagnon  
 Gilmour  
 Godin (Acadie—Bathurst)  
 Gouk  
 Gruending  
 Guay  
 Hardy  
 Herron  
 Hillstrom  
 Jaffer  
 Karygiannis  
 Konrad  
 Lebel  
 Loubier  
 MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough)  
 Marceau  
 Matthews  
 McDonough  
 Meredith  
 Morrison  
 O'Reilly  
 Penson  
 Perron  
 Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)  
 Plamondon  
 Reynolds  
 Rocheleau  
 Schmidt  
 Shepherd  
 Speller  
 Steckle  
 Stoffer  
 Szabo  
 Turp  
 Valeri  
 Venne  
 White (North Vancouver)

Bailey  
 Benoit  
 Bernier (Bonaventure—Gaspé—  
 Bernier (Tobique—Mactaquac)  
 Blaikie  
 Breitzkreuz (Yellowhead)  
 Brien  
 Caccia  
 Calder  
 Casey  
 Charbonneau  
 Crête  
 Dalphond-Guiral  
 Debien  
 Desrochers  
 Dubé (Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière)  
 Duceppe  
 Earle  
 Epp  
 Gauthier  
 Girard-Bujold  
 Godin (Châteauguay)  
 Grewal  
 Guarnieri  
 Guimond  
 Hart  
 Hill (Prince George—Peace River)  
 Ianno  
 Johnston  
 Keddy (South Shore)  
 Laurin  
 Lill  
 Lunn  
 Mancini  
 Mark  
 Mayfield  
 Ménard  
 Mills (Red Deer)  
 Muise  
 Obhrai  
 Peric  
 Picard (Drummond)  
 Pillitteri  
 Price  
 Ritz  
 Sauvageau  
 Scott (Skeena)  
 Solberg  
 St-Hilaire  
 Stinson  
 Strahl  
 Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean)  
 Ur  
 Vellacott  
 Volpe  
 Williams—115

Folco  
 Fry  
 Goodale  
 Gray (Windsor West)  
 Harb  
 Hubbard  
 Jackson  
 Jordan  
 Keyes  
 Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)  
 Kraft Sloan  
 Lavigne  
 MacAulay  
 Maloney  
 Martin (LaSalle—Émard)  
 McKay (Scarborough East)  
 McWhinney  
 Mitchell  
 Myers  
 Normand  
 O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)  
 Parrish  
 Peterson  
 Phinney  
 Proctor  
 Proulx  
 Richardson  
 Rock  
 Scott (Fredericton)  
 St. Denis  
 Telegdi  
 Torsney  
 Wappel  
 Wilfert—109

Fontana  
 Gagliano  
 Graham  
 Grose  
 Harvard  
 Iftody  
 Jennings  
 Karetak-Lindell  
 Kilger (Stormont—Dundas—Charlottenburgh)  
 Knutson  
 Lastewka  
 Limoges  
 Malhi  
 Manley  
 McGuire  
 McLellan (Edmonton West)  
 Minna  
 Murray  
 Nault  
 O'Brien (Labrador)  
 Paradis  
 Patry  
 Pettigrew  
 Pratt  
 Proud  
 Reed  
 Robillard  
 Saada  
 Sekora  
 Stewart (Brant)  
 Thibeault  
 Vanclief  
 Whelan

## PAIRED MEMBERS

\*Nil/aucun

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried. Accordingly the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

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

● (1805 )

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland):** Order, please. It being 6.06 p.m. the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's order paper.

## NAYS

## Members

Adams  
 Anderson  
 Assadourian  
 Baker  
 Barnes  
 Bélanger  
 Bennett  
 Bevilacqua  
 Bonin  
 Boudria  
 Brown  
 Bulte  
 Cannis  
 Carroll  
 Chan  
 Collette  
 Copps  
 DeVillers  
 Dion  
 Dromisky  
 Eggleton

Alcock  
 Assad  
 Augustine  
 Bakopanos  
 Bélair  
 Bellemare  
 Bertrand  
 Blondin-Andrew  
 Bonwick  
 Bradshaw  
 Bryden  
 Byrne  
 Caplan  
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## CRIMINAL CODE

**Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Wanuskewin, Canadian Alliance)** moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should defend the constitutionality of Section 43 of the Criminal Code in the Courts and, if necessary, should take legislative action to reinstate Section 43 in the event that it is struck down, including invoking the notwithstanding clause of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Section 33 of the Constitution Act, 1982).

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege and an honour for me to rise to speak to Motion No. 341, a motion which would protect

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teachers, parents and their children from unwarranted and heavy handed state intrusion. I will read the motion again:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should defend the constitutionality of Section 43 of the Criminal Code in the Courts and, if necessary, should take legislative action to reinstate Section 43 in the event that it is struck down, including invoking the notwithstanding clause of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The reason I brought the motion forward is that some children rights advocates want to see section 43 declared by the courts to be in violation of the charter of rights and freedoms.

In December 1999 a group calling itself the Canadian Foundation for Children, Youth and the Law asked the Ontario superior court to declare section 43 to be in violation of the charter and therefore unconstitutional. My motion opposes such efforts. I understand from other colleagues in the House today that there is a fair bit of support for the nature of the motion before us, and I am grateful.

Under section 43 of the criminal code today parents are allowed to use physical force to restrain or correct their children as long as it is not abusive, is by way of correction and is reasonable under the circumstances. The relevant statute is section 43 of the criminal code which reads as follows:

Every school teacher, parent or person standing in the place of a parent is justified in using force by way of correction toward a pupil or child, as the case may be, who is under his care, if the force does not exceed what is reasonable under the circumstances.

This section of the code limits the way force can be used on a child in two ways. First, a parent is justified in using force only if the force is intended and used for a specific purpose, namely by way of correction.

That requirement has existed in Canadian law since 1864 in a decision in which the court stated that the power of correction can only be used in the interest of instruction. It cannot be for some arbitrariness, anger or bad humour. That would be an offence punishable like other ordinary offences.

In other words, force is only justifiable if it is used in the best interest of a child to correct a child from engaging in improper conduct. The section does not justify a parent using force to vent anger. An instructional purpose with respect to the child's interest must motivate the use of force.

Second, a parent's use of force is limited also in that it must be reasonable under the circumstances. In assessing whether the force used by the parent was reasonable, the courts have formulated a test which considers the following factors, and I think they are good factors.

The court takes into account the nature of the child's offence calling for punishment and whether such conduct merits punishment. It takes into account the age and the character of that child; the likely effect of punishment on the child; the degree and gravity of the punishment; the manner in which the punishment was inflicted; the injuries that resulted, if any; the parts of the body where the force was applied; and whether punishment was motivated by arbitrariness, caprice, anger or bad temper.

• (1810)

While judges sometimes apply these criteria differently it is safe to say that the successful application of such criteria demonstrates the effectiveness and the value of section 43.

In court hearings in December last year the Coalition for Family Autonomy noted that a database search of the weekly criminal bulletin showed that there were 99 cases in which parental discipline was the issue. In these cases we see the criteria of reasonableness at work. For example, since 1965 there have been five cases where acquittals were entered when bruising occurred but 16 cases involving bruising where the accused was convicted. The court took this into account and convicted 16 of these individuals.

In cases involving objects used to strike a child, the case survey indicates that there were twice as many convictions as acquittals. Of the 47 cases which reported the use of some object in striking or the "discipline", there were 31 convictions and just 13 acquittals. In every case involving children under two a conviction was entered. The case law survey also indicated that courts are mindful of the manner in which the discipline is administered.

The point is simply that section 43 has operated in practice in a manner where the jurisprudence has developed a detailed set of factors which the courts have used to interpret section 43 and its demand for reasonableness. All this points to the fact that this section in the criminal code is both workable and is working.

In the 34 year period from 1965 to 1999 in only 24 of the 99 cases found in the database search was there an acquittal of a parent charged of assaulting his or her child. That very low number hardly suggests that adults are routinely using section 43 to get away with abusing their children. In fact the more numerous convictions indicate otherwise. In the 24 acquittals there may have been instances in which the judge made a error and should not have acquitted the parent. That is a problem with the judge. The appeals should happen and it should be pursued to the full extent of the law.

Section 43 of the criminal code is doing its job. Prior to the enactment of this section of the code there was no legislation placing limits on the use of physical correction and there were no government agencies designed to protect children from abuse. When section 43 of the code came into law, children had for the first time legal protection from physical abuse. Thanks to section

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43 parents cannot physically abuse their children in the name of discipline. They cannot exceed what is reasonable under the circumstances. As long as the police and the courts do their jobs, child abusers will be prosecuted under the law.

It is somewhat ironic that the very same people who are arguing for the removal of section 43, argue that it protects only parental rights. That is clearly not the case. The irony is that the whole reason section 43 came into existence in the first place was to balance the right of parents to correct the behaviour of their children and the rights of children not to be abused.

It is a good law. It was well conceived at the time. It has served its purpose well and continues to serve us well today. For that reason section 43 strikes that necessary balance between the rights of parents and the rights of children. On one hand, parents must have the freedom to fulfil their responsibility to their children and to society and to raise their children to be moral, decent people who respect others. On the other hand, we believe that children have the right to be free from physical abuse and bodily harm. Section 43 strikes that proper balance.

That is why it is disconcerting that some children rights advocates, specifically the group calling itself the Canadian Foundation for Children, Youth and the Law, are trying to have this section of the criminal code removed or declared unconstitutional. If this group succeeds in having section 43 struck down, the results would be absurd and totally unacceptable. Many good and loving parents from that point on would be made criminals overnight.

The statistics indicate that some 70% of parents spank their child from time to time as a reasonable corrective discipline in respect to their children. Removing section 43 would mean that many of them would become criminals overnight. It would simply not be true of parents who swat little Johnny on the bottom from time to time. It would be true of parents who do not even spank their children. When a parent tries to restrain a child, that could be treated as an assault subject to criminal prosecution.

● (1815)

I am going to talk about why there is a real chill for teachers if section 43 is removed. If section 43 is removed, a parent could be charged with criminal assault for forcibly removing a misbehaving child from a shopping mall, for picking up a misbehaving child and putting him or her out of the way of harm or for putting him or her to bed against his or her will. Teachers share this exact same concern.

The Canadian Teachers' Federation appeared as an intervenor in last December's court case in Ontario and argued in favour of retaining section 43 of the criminal code. The federation believed that removing the section would be detrimental to maintaining a safe and secure school environment. The federation pointed to a

number of day to day school situations in which the safety of students and the learning environment could be adversely affected.

I am sure there are teachers here who could tell us of specific instances where restraint is required in a school situation for the safety of a student and the protection of others as well. The teachers in their intervention cited instances where there is the need to protect students or teachers when a fight occurs at school, including the need to restrain those students if necessary. Also there are situations where there is a need to escort an uncooperative student to the principal's office, to bring him or her along by the arm. In that instance lo and behold an assault charge may be laid for that type of escort down the hall.

The teachers referred to a situation involving ejecting a student who refuses to leave the classroom or the school itself. The teachers' federation also referred in its intervention to situations such as during a field trip when they have to place a young student on the bus who has refused to return to the bus. There are also situations where teachers may have to restrain a cognitively impaired student.

The teachers' federation is concerned that if section 43 were removed from the criminal code, the result would be widespread fear among teachers of being charged with assault. As a precaution teachers would be advised or would choose not to intervene in school situations since stepping in to resolve the difficult situation might lead to their being charged with assault. That reticence of teachers to step into the gap could result in more serious injuries to students as well as in a deterioration of the school learning environment.

Removing section 43 for our schools and Canadian families would be a disgrace to our judicial system. If it were struck down, it would be a massive intrusion of the state into the educational and family environments of our nation. Former Prime Minister Trudeau said that the state had no business in the bedrooms of the nation. Anyone who removes section 43 of the criminal code will be moving the state into the nation's family rooms. That would be tragic. The state makes a lousy parent and should not presume to tell parents how best to shape the moral character of their children as long as abuse is not involved.

That is why I have introduced this motion, to defend section 43 of the criminal code, even to the extent of going into court situations and invoking the notwithstanding clause if necessary. The aim of the motion is to enable caring non-abusive parents to do the best job possible of raising their children to be responsible, well adjusted individuals and members of society. It protects the rights of parents to raise their children in accordance with their moral and religious beliefs about the effect of child rearing, their personal knowledge of the unique characteristics of their own children and their own understanding of how best to discipline children which has been gained from their parents and their own experiences during childhood.

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The motion accomplishes this goal in two ways. First, it requires that the government defend section 43 of the criminal code in the courts. In the event that one or more rulings were to strike down section 43, the motion would permit the government to invoke the notwithstanding clause of the charter of rights and freedoms. Notwithstanding a court's decision to strike down the law, section 43 would remain the law of the land. After the Sharpe decision relating to child pornography, more and more parliamentarians are realizing that parliament has an obligation to protect Canadians from judicial rulings which we cannot understand and which do not make a lot of sense.

Parenting has always been a challenge. Raising children to be responsible and law-abiding members of society is more of a challenge than ever before. The surge in teen violence during the past decade testifies to that fact. The shootings a year ago in high schools in the U.S. and Canada have horrified all of us. Now is not the time to handicap parents in their role as moral guides. It is for these reasons that I brought forward this initiative.

• (1820)

In my wrap-up in the last five minutes I will refer to some of the effects of physical discipline on children.

At this time I want to ask for the unanimous consent of the House to have the motion before us deemed adopted and passed.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland):** The hon. member for Wanuskewin has asked for the unanimous consent of the House to have his motion passed. Does the hon. member for Wanuskewin have the unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to the member's motion in support of the general thrust of the motion. The tone of my support is somewhat different from that of the member who moved the motion. He tended to configure his support for the motion in the context of being anti-state or keeping the state out of how the family is run. I would suggest to him that section 43 is already a manifestation of the state having a right to set limits on what parents are able to do in terms of disciplining their children.

There was somewhat of a contradiction in the member's argument. Either the state has this right or it does not. I would suggest that it does and that section 43 is an appropriate reflection of that right of the state. The member himself pointed to the fact that the origin of this section was an intention to protect children and to limit and to eliminate physical abuse of children. It was not designed to condone, to permit or to promote, but rather to set the

appropriate context where physical discipline can be used by parents on children and by teachers on students.

I would call the attention of the House to the fact that this is not just a matter of individual members of parliament having this concern, it is also a concern that teachers have. It has been expressed as the member noted by the Canadian Teachers' Federation.

The federation argued quite persuasively that with the elimination of section 43, if it were to be removed from the criminal code, there would be a dramatic increase in the number of assault charges on teachers. As a precaution teachers would be advised or would choose not to intervene in school situations since their stepping in to resolve the situation might lead to their being charged with assault. The reticence of teachers to step in would result in more serious injuries to students as well as a deterioration of the classroom and school learning environment.

What we are talking about here is not the premeditated corporal punishment of strapping that used to occur in schools. We are talking about those situations in which teachers want to have the freedom to intervene in the moment to protect students when there is a fight, to escort uncooperative students, to eject a student who refuses to leave a classroom, to place a young student on a bus who refuses to leave after a field trip or who refuses to go and needs to go, or to restrain certain students.

All these things do not have to do with the old fashioned premeditated corporal punishment that took the form of strapping, the efficacy of which I always doubted very much. I think schools are better without it. I do not see any evidence that schools perform worse in any significant respect given the absence of strapping or the absence of premeditated corporal punishment.

To suggest that teachers would not be able to do anything would be a mistake, just as it would be a mistake to suggest that parents cannot do anything. Whenever we get into a zero tolerance situation we create a culture of fear and intimidation. We already see this now with the whole notion of physical contact. Teachers and other people who deal with children are afraid to put their arms around anybody. They are afraid to hug a child who needs emotional support. They are afraid to do all kinds of things for fear they might be accused of child abuse or sexual harassment.

• (1825)

We are trying to eliminate judgment from our society. When anything can possibly be used in a negative way we say let us not have it at all. That is a mistake. We are human beings. We are given a certain amount of freedom and we have to exercise judgment. The motion says that we do not want parents or teachers to be able to exercise judgment and to be held accountable for the kind of judgments they make. We want to eliminate that capacity for judgment. That is a mistake.

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I can think of obvious examples. When toddlers or kids want to put their hands on a hot stove, are we to be criminalized for tapping the tops of their hands and telling them not to put their hands on the hot element or in the fire? Are we to be criminalized for patting them on the bottom if they persist in running out into traffic? These kinds of little things can create an atmosphere for various kinds of witch hunts. There is also the example of siblings harming each other who need to be kept from doing so even if it is by physical restraint or physical discipline.

I think section 43 at the present time is sufficient. I have received a lot of mail from constituents who seem to feel that the elimination of section 43 is imminent and they want me to stop it. There is a bit of political campaigning here. Some people are trying to exploit this issue for political purposes, creating a sense that something is about to happen which is not about to happen.

I have always made it clear to constituents who have written to me that I would not be in favour of repealing section 43 for the reasons I have just outlined, and I think the majority of members of parliament would not either. If there is a way we can put this to rest both for the sake of the substance of the matter and to eliminate some of the politics that have surrounded the issue, that would serve everybody very well.

I come from a family which for at least two generations the use of corporal punishment was something that was exceedingly rare so my comments are not out of defence of anything I have found in my own experience. I think all of us, at least those in my generation, would attest that many of our parents come from a generation where corporal punishment was the rule of the day. Family stories are replete with what happened if a child talked back to his or her father or misbehaved. There has been all kinds of corporal punishment.

I am not making an argument for corporal punishment. I am just saying that some of the connections we often simplistically make do not always hold up sociologically and historically. I think one of the best generations that ever existed in this country, my parents' generation, was a generation that was raised in a context where parents dished out a lot more physical discipline than any of us here would regard as acceptable. I am not saying that was a good thing; in fact in many respects I think it was a bad thing, but to draw any quick and easy psychological or sociological conclusions about when people are on the receiving end of corporal punishment, if it happens in an appropriate context it is not always for the worst.

We should leave section 43 as it stands. I hope other members feel likewise.

**Mr. Tom Wappel (Scarborough Southwest, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I seconded this motion because I support section 43. I want to discuss this motion and take the approach of a lawyer as opposed to a teacher.

I want to say for those who are following the debate either in *Hansard* or on television or in other reported media that this is a motion, not a bill. This motion was not deemed to be votable by the subcommittee on private members' business so there will be no vote. Indeed, the speeches this evening will end after one hour of debate and the subject matter will be dropped from the order of debate. Having said that, I think the subject matter is important. I commend the hon. member who is the mover of the motion for bringing it forward, particularly in view of the current legal history.

● (1830)

The motion calls for the federal government to defend the section. As I am sure the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice will point out when he gets a chance to speak, the federal government is defending section 43 and did defend section 43 before the Supreme Court of Canada. I want to take a look at the section specifically. We are talking about section 43, but perhaps people do not truly know what it says. It is really very short, so I propose to read it.

I am referring to *Martin's Criminal Code*, which refers to section 43 of the Criminal Code of Canada. It states:

Every schoolteacher, parent or person standing in the place of a parent is justified in using force by way of correction toward a pupil or child, as the case may be, who is under his care, if the force does not exceed what is reasonable under the circumstances.

It is important to note exactly to whom this section applies. It applies to schoolteachers. It applies to parents. It applies to persons standing in the place of a parent. It applies to child and pupil. It does not apply, let us say, to police, coaches or others who might come in contact with children. It applies to those individuals named.

I want to read a brief synopsis of section 43 contained in *Martin's Criminal Code*.

This section justifies the use of force by certain persons to correct a child or pupil.

Of course "force" is not defined. Some people call this the spanking section, but there are many other kinds of force that may be used in varying degrees that are not spanking. It is important to note that we are talking about the use of force.

It continues:

The persons who may rely upon this section are schoolteachers, parents or those standing in the place of a parent. The child or pupil must be under the care of the person using the force, and the force must be applied for the purpose of correcting the child.

That is critically important. The force must be applied for the purpose of correcting the child. It continues:

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Thus, if the child is too young to learn from the correction or is incapable due to mental disability, the use of force will not be justified by s. 43. The force applied cannot exceed what is reasonable in the circumstances. . .

In determining whether the force used has exceeded what is reasonable under the circumstances, the court must consider both from an objective and subjective standpoint such matters as the nature of the offence calling for correction, the age and character of the child and the likely effect of the punishment on the particular child, the degree of gravity of the punishment, the circumstances under which it is inflicted and the injuries, if any, suffered.

These two citations I have made specifically because to me they indicate how this section is to work. It is a very specific section, designed for very specific people in very specific circumstances. It is designed to be examined on a fact by fact situational basis. To me that is what is important. What may be reasonable use of force by a teacher in one circumstance may not be reasonable use of force by a teacher in another circumstance. It is very important that there be a combination of the objective and subjective tests.

It is also very important for the reasons we heard from the two members who spoke previously, that the use of force in appropriate circumstances in a reasonable manner be continued to be permitted. We heard a couple of the more obvious examples given by the member for Winnipeg—Transcona, in particular where the immediate safety of the child is of concern.

• (1835)

The people who have opposed section 43, in my opinion, have taken worst case fact situations and applied them to tar section 43 with an unnecessarily black brush. The court system is adequately designed to deal with each individual fact situation. If there is an aberrant decision by an aberrant judge, the court of appeal is there to provide guidance in a particular circumstance.

The use of appropriate force in appropriate circumstances has been part of human history since the first child was produced. It seems eminently reasonable that section 43 is there not only for the protection of the child, but also for the protection of those who apply force in reasonable circumstances for the purpose of correction.

Having said that, I really do not want to go on ad infinitum. The section is reasonable. There is no reasonable argument that I can see or accept for the abolition of the section. I think it should be maintained.

I want to say one thing, however, about the use of section 33. I think that the motion stated that if the section were to be found unconstitutional, then we should use section 33. With that I agree. That is a nuclear option that parliament has to control the courts. It should be used very sparingly and very carefully, but it can be used and should be used in appropriate circumstances to demonstrate the supremacy of parliament.

**Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC):** Mr. Speaker, this is a very interesting and timely debate that has been brought forward by the hon. member for Wanuskewin. Private member's motion No. 341 talks about defending the constitutionality of section 43 of our criminal code and, if necessary, taking the legislative action to reinstate section 43, including invoking the notwithstanding clause of our Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

I am very supportive of the upholding and the reinforcement, if necessary, of section 43 of our criminal code. I think the member opposite and previous speakers have spoken quite eloquently and have set out before the House the necessity and the background with respect to why we have section 43 in the criminal code. It is there essentially to set very much a standard for the reasonable force that can be used to take corrective measures or to take action when necessary to discipline a child in a situation, whether it be at home or at school.

That section of the criminal code has been in place for a number of years. It has been tested in the courts. It has been examined extensively by courts and by litigators across the country.

I want to thank the hon. member for Wanuskewin for bringing this motion forward.

Unfortunately, I have some difficulty with respect to invoking the notwithstanding clause with respect to this type of criminal code section. That is not to diminish the importance of what the hon. member is seeking to accomplish. I think it is a productive opportunity here in the House to examine the situation, to flesh out this issue further and to look at the issue of discipline, in particular with respect to parents, teachers and community workers, those who are in regular contact with children. It is a very trying time.

It goes without saying that adults are very much in a situation at times where they are forced to make the judgment call to decide whether to take the appropriate physical action, which they must measure, and somehow try to apply a standard of restraint when it comes to physical coercion or restraint of a child. It becomes a very dicey and grey issue. This type of debate is helpful in that regard.

• (1840)

Parents are in a unique position because they know their children best and they know when they have to take that type of extraordinary measure in terms of controlling a child in certain instances. Children, obviously, at times need discipline and parents need the power to invoke this type of reasonable corrective action. Parents know best. They know the unique characteristics of their children and they know the most effective way, for the most part, to raise their child, including discipline in that process.



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There is obviously a need to protect the bodily integrity of everyone, and our criminal code does so. It goes without saying that children are more informed about their rights than they have ever been at any time in our history. That is a good thing. The education system teaches children and teaches our citizens generally more about the law than in previous generations. It is very important that Canadians know and understand their legal rights and the obligations which flow from those rights.

Section 43 would help to defend the right of a parent or an adult to intervene in certain circumstances and apply measured, reasonable, restrained physical force. Thus, the issue becomes, is there a necessity to protect that right? Yes, there is. That is what is at the very root of this motion. It is a genuine, sincere attempt to protect and uphold a section of the criminal code that has a very important and productive background and necessity in this country.

That is not to say that there should ever be any indication that this section should be misused or that this section should be construed in some way as to condone or encourage any sort of excessive physical force.

There have been some high profile cases before the courts. The one that comes to mind is a recent case in which an American citizen, in this country, was seen to be using what was perceived, in a parking lot area, to be excessive force in disciplining his daughter. That case resulted in the police intervening and has become somewhat of a cause célèbre in this country.

The courts have been quite measured in examining these situations. They have, in their discretion, looked at the factual circumstances of each and every case. Again, as referred to by the hon. member for Scarborough Southwest, it is very much an individualized situation. In every case before a court of law there is an ample opportunity to flesh out the circumstances, the factual evidence. The crown prosecutor, in conjunction with the police, is to present evidence that would support a charge of assault or a like charge that involved the use of force. Section 43 is very much there as a filter and a sword to protect the person who has been accused of exercising this type of physical intervention.

It is understandable that there is some trepidation. We have all received calls both in our constituency offices and here in Ottawa from concerned citizens every time there is a case before the courts. Every time this situation arises there is a concern that parents and adults, likewise, feel that they will not be permitted to use reasonable force.

The only trepidation I have in the wording of this particular motion is with the reference to the notwithstanding clause.

I have had discussions with the mover of this motion, who gives assurance, and I think it is implicit when we read it carefully, that it

is very much not a pre-emptive strike, but it is there in its wording to suggest that if things proceed in the fashion that the hon. member anticipates, there may be the need for the government to intervene.

For that reason I find it difficult to justify the way in which it is presented. That is to say, at this time there is not an epidemic of abuse, where individuals are relying on this section to justify abuse. We are not faced with a situation where there is a great deal of misunderstanding as to what type of force is appropriate.

Obviously, when physical injury results or when force is used in a very inappropriate way, sometimes it is not just the physical abuse that needs to be examined. We obviously know of occasions where a child can be berated, verbally abused, intimidated and scared, and that type of abuse also has to be examined when looking at like situations.

● (1845)

There is an important quote by Morris Manning that I want to put on the record. In his legal commentary, he said:

If our freedom of conscience or religion can be taken away by a law which operates notwithstanding the Charter, if our right to life or liberty can be taken not in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice, what freedom do we have.

He is obviously suggesting that we must tread very lightly when using the notwithstanding clause. Much akin to the idea behind this motion and behind section 43 of the criminal code, we must be very measured and careful before invoking such an extreme measure. It was referred to as the nuclear bomb of our legal system.

To use the notwithstanding clause essentially annihilates precedent. It annihilates the use of the courts to do their job and to exercise discretion and judgment over our laws. It suspends discussion on a legal principle and on a law. We have to be extremely cautious before going down that road. I know the hon. member who moved this motion is aware of that.

This is a very subjective and objective debate when it comes to the appropriateness of physical intervention. I suspect all members in the House feel very strongly about upholding the importance and integrity of section 43 of the criminal code.

For those reasons, I feel it is appropriate that we exhaust all avenues currently within our system and that judicial discretion be respected in each and every case. One would hope that this particular factual circumstance under section 43 will not be struck down by our courts. That is not to anticipate what any superior court or supreme court in the country will do, but at this time I do not feel it is necessary to invoke or at least threaten to invoke the notwithstanding clause.

I again congratulate the hon. member on his initiative in bringing this forward. It is a useful debate and one that may have to be revisited at some time in the near future.

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**Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak. I have done a lot of work in this area and have formulated a declaration of parental rights and responsibilities, which, if time allows, I will go into a little bit.

I want to say several things in the short time I am allowed. I want to show the necessity of the resolution we are debating. I also want to point out clearly that the government says one thing but does another. It talks the talk but it does not walk the walk. That is why this resolution is necessary. I will give a couple of very good examples of that. That is why this should have been voted on in the House but the government would not allow that.

Before I go into this, I will point out my view and the views of many of my constituents on this. Parental discipline is quite different from child abuse and neglect. Child abuse and neglect should not be tolerated but section 43 strikes a balance by protecting children from abuse while still allowing parents to correct their children, within the limits that are acceptable to Canadian society.

The Canadian Teachers' Federation states:

Section 43 of the Criminal Code does not sanction or condone child abuse. . . . There is no evidence to indicate that the existence of Section 43 is a root cause of child abuse or that it encourages abuse of children.

I also point out that responsible, loving parents sometimes have to correct their children to keep them from harm. Removing section 43 of the criminal code may make criminals out of parents who use reasonable corrective action with their kids.

Parents, not the government, are best suited to determine the needs, including disciplinary measures, of their own children. Removing a means for parents to discipline their children will result in more state intrusion into family life.

Maintaining section 43 of the criminal code shows respect for Canadian parents. It shows respect for the democratic process. It is through debate in parliament, not in the court chambers, where important public policy decisions like this should be made.

• (1850 )

If there are concerns about what is deemed reasonable in parental discipline, it would be better to develop guidelines rather than potentially criminalizing all parents by a court decision. Using tax dollars to fund a lobby group to make an end run around the democratic process and push social policy through the courts is inappropriate.

Those are my views and that is where I am coming from when I make my comments.

We have laws that address abuse. The government has done a terrible job on family issues and should not interfere with parental rights.

I am a former teacher. I want to read what the Canadian Teachers' Federation had to say about section 43 of the criminal code, because this section does not just deal with parents, it also deals with teachers.

The Canadian Teachers' Federation appeared in court in December to argue in favour of keeping section 43 in the criminal code. The federation believes that the removal of section 43 would be detrimental to maintaining a safe and secure school environment for all students. Removing section 43 would encourage some students to engage in insubordinate or disruptive behaviour.

As an aside, I was a teacher for 24 and a half years and I think that is a very key point. We should not tie the hands of our teachers in this regard.

The Canadian Teachers' Federation points to a number of day to day school situations in which the safety of students in the learning environment would be adversely affected if section 43 were to be repealed. Such situations are more likely to occur in a school setting than in the home given the large number of children and youth who attend school.

Here are some examples that the Canadian Teachers' Federation puts forth. There is a need to protect students or teachers when a fight occurs at school, including the need to restrain students if necessary. Another example is the need to escort an unco-operative student to the principal's office. A third situation would involve ejecting a student who refuses to leave the classroom or the school itself. A fourth situation would be placing a young student on the bus in a situation where the student has been on a field trip and refuses to return on the bus. The last example would be restraining a cognitively impaired student.

These are all examples I can relate to because I had similar concerns and incidents when I was teaching.

The Canadian Teachers' Federation is concerned that if section 43 were removed from the criminal code, the result would be a dramatic increase in the number of assault charges. As a precaution, teachers would be advised or choose not to intervene in school situations, since their stepping in to resolve the situation might lead to their being charged with assault. We would accomplish the very opposite of what we want, which is the protection of our children. That is why we should not change this.

I also want to point out that since the state has discouraged the use of physical correction in schools, violence has increased, which is the opposite of what many of these groups have argued.

I said I would give a couple of examples in the few minutes remaining. I do not have time to read the entire response to a petition I had submitted in the House. The response comes from the government and indicates quite clearly that the government says one thing to the public but it does not walk the walk.

This document states:

This government fully recognizes the indispensable role of parents in the upbringing of their children and the need for governments at all levels to support parents and families in the exercise of this role.

It then goes on to say that section 43 of the criminal code is consistent with these principles and that it will protect them. There is no indication on the part of government that it is going to withdraw this.

It goes on to say "and is not funding any research on its removal from the criminal code". The government said this on July 22, 1998. Guess what we found out in November of that year? We found out that it was funding the Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children, a loyal lobby group purchased with \$365,000 of taxpayers' money. We also found out that the government was only funding one side of the issue, and this was the only organization it was funding.

I wish I had more time because I think this is a key point. The government says that it is defending parents, that it is defending their rights, that it will not touch section 43 and that it will not fund any of these things, but a few months later we find out that it was in fact pouring big bucks into that.

When my colleague from Calgary Centre pointed this out, he sent an inquiry to the bureaucracy about the parliamentary review of Canada's report that it was sending, and we found out that the government funded only one side of the issue.

The second example is the court challenges program. Here we have the government again funding only one side of the issue. I have evidence on this but I do not have time to give it. This is yet another example of the government saying one thing but doing another. The funding of the Canadian Foundation for Children, Youth and the Law is clear on this issue.

I wish I had time to quote from my declaration of parental rights and responsibilities but I will refer people to my website on the Internet if they want to know what I proposed in this regard.

• (1855 )

**Mr. John Maloney (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this motion calls on the federal government to, first and foremost, defend the constitutionality of section 43 in the courts. I want to

### *Private Members' Business*

indicate at the outset that the federal government is doing exactly that. We are defending the constitutionality of section 43 in the courts. This matter is in fact still before the courts and, accordingly, it would be inappropriate for me to provide further comment on this specific case.

There has been a general misunderstanding of the purpose and the ambit of section 43. Section 43 provides that a parent, teacher or a person standing in the place of a parent may use force to correct a child, provided that the force used is reasonable in all circumstances. This is what sections 43 says.

Section 43 does not, however, condone or authorize the physical abuse of children. Equally important, it does not shield parents, teachers or caregivers from interference by the state or guarantee their freedom to discipline or correct children in any manner they see fit.

How does section 43 operate? A person who has been charged with the assault of a child under his or her care can raise section 43 as a defence. In other words, section 43 provides a defence to a criminal charge of assault for a limited category of persons in a limited set of circumstances.

Section 43 is a limited defence to a criminal charge because it is only available to an accused who is a parent, teacher or person acting in the place of a parent, and only with respect to a child or pupil under the person's care. It is a limited defence because the force in question must have been administered for the purpose of correction. Force exerted in a fit of rage or in a deliberate attempt to hurt a child will not be justified under section 43.

Finally, it is a limited defence because the force used must have been reasonable in all of the circumstances.

Canadian courts are very accustomed to applying a standard of reasonableness. Courts that are asked to consider a section 43 defence generally assess the reasonableness of the force by considering a number of factors. For example, they consider the nature and severity of the force in question, including any injuries suffered by the child, the child's behaviour or action calling for correction, the age of the child and the history of disciplinary action by the parent, vis-à-vis that child. Further, when determining whether the force used was reasonable, the standard that the courts apply is that of the Canadian community and not the standard or practice of the individual family or school.

To return to the specific issue raised by the motion, the federal government is defending the constitutionality of section 43 on the basis that it reflects a constitutional balance of the interests of children, parents and of Canadian society. However, section 43, interpreted and applied in conformity with the charter, does not condone or authorize child abuse.

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It is also important to note that the protection of children from child abuse is not only a priority for the federal government in terms of criminal law reform. Provincial and territorial child protection legislation authorizes state intervention to protect children in need of protection, including to protect children from child abuse. As a result, even if the charges are not laid under the criminal code, child protection authorities can and do intervene under provincial or territorial legislation where parental discipline is inappropriate or excessive.

The motion also calls on the federal government to invoke section 33 of the charter or the notwithstanding clause in the event that section 43 of the criminal code is struck down. In my view, it is inappropriate to consider the invocation of the notwithstanding clause of the charter at this point in time. Invoking section 33 is a serious step that we must not take easily or casually.

If section 43 is ultimately struck down as unconstitutional, I would caution us to allow for a considered review of all of the options open to us to deal with both the criminal law system and the child protection laws before ever contemplating using section 33 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Invoking section 33 of the charter is a serious matter which should only be considered in exceptional cases and only after all other legal avenues have been exhausted. This is the only responsible choice open to us as members of parliament.

**Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Wanuskewin, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I think it was the understanding of all members in the House, including the Liberal member opposite, that the use of section 33, the notwithstanding clause, was only "if necessary". We would first use the full extent of the law and the appeals process. Because of the importance of this whole issue, once that was exhausted only then would section 33 kick in. The record has to be clear. We are not talking about using section 33 pre-emptively or prematurely.

I note with some sadness though, and members of the House may be aware of the fact, that the government has defended section 43.

• (1900 )

On the other hand it is with sadness that I say it has also funded the Canadian Foundation for Children, Youth and the Law, the very group that brought this challenge into the Ontario superior court to declare section 43 in violation of the charter. It is a bit sad that tax dollars are used by the government to erode or undermine section 43 by way of the funding dollars given to such a group through the court challenges program.

In the remaining moments I want to talk about what the research says about the effects of physical discipline on children. A number of studies have been done over the years. Some studies have found negative outcomes while others have found positive ones. I would like to describe why the conclusions have varied so much by

referring to the work of Dr. Robert Larzelere of the University of Nebraska Medical Centre.

In 1996 he published in the journal "Pediatrics" one of the most important resources we have for understanding the debate among current researchers. He undertook a literary review of all the empirical studies published in scholarly journals over the last 30 years. He studied 35 relevant articles on this topic and found conflicting results among them.

In reviewing the literature he discovered that the different results could largely be explained by the different methods and approaches used by the researchers. His key finding was that studies which show that physical punishment had negative results did not distinguish abusive from non-abusive physical discipline. They sought families in which physical discipline was used but failed to inquire about the nature of the physical discipline. Some of these methodologically flawed studies then included family situations where unreasonably harsh or abusive measures of physical punishment were used. On the other hand, studies which showed positive results from physical punishment or discipline, the word I would prefer to use, were the ones that excluded abusive family situations.

Here is a breakdown of the results from those 35 studies done by Dr. Larzelere. Only 11 of the 35 studies excluded abusive family situations. Those are the ones within the parameters, the ones to consider. The others in effect could be set aside because they had a methodologically flawed approach. Six of these eleven studies showed beneficial outcomes, four showed neutral outcomes, and only one showed any negative outcome. That suggests that when used properly by parents who truly love their children, mild, moderate physical correction when kids are young can have positive results and no negative results.

These observations are relevant to the debate over section 43 of the criminal code. Both sides in the debate agree that abusive physical punishment is harmful to children. We should not allow it or tolerate it. Where we disagree is on the effects of non-abusive physical punishment.

The studies that saw negative results from physical correction, which included abusive family situations, have to be disregarded in the interest of fairness and in the interest of truth for the situation here if we want to learn about the outcomes of non-abusive physical discipline by loving parents.

I can cite from my own family situation. I have a son who is 21 years old, a daughter who is 18 years old, a son who is 6 years old, and a little one who is five months old. The six year old has had one little spank on the bottom in his some six years of life. Considering his personality and so on, I suspect that he will not ever require more than a glance sideways or some other method of discipline. However I do believe that the backup, the fact that he knew it

happened once in the far distant past, is a good thing. It is also helpful that we use all other alternative methods of discipline.

I think we cannot confuse apples and oranges here by talking about clearly abusive family situations where there is all kinds of dysfunction and balanced and proper functioning family situations.

There have actually been more recent studies since the 1996 publication of Dr. Larzelere's article, but all those studies do not challenge the finding of his literary review that in non-abusive situations physical correction can in fact be positive and beneficial to the child. The most recent study by Marjorie Gunnoe in *Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine*, August 1997, provides important confirmation of those findings.

At this point I very humbly and straightforwardly seek unanimous consent of the House to have the motion before us deemed adopted and passed.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland):** Is there unanimous consent?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

• (1905 )

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland):** The time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired. As the motion has not been designated as a votable item, the order is dropped from the order paper.

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## ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

[*Translation*]

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

### GASOLINE PRICES

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, on February 21, I asked a question on gasoline prices and I would like to read this question to be sure that those who are listening understand why I am speaking in the House today.

At the time, I said:

—gasoline now costs 71.9 cents a litre in Bathurst, while diesel is at 79.4 cents a litre in Yarmouth, the highest level in ten years.

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Canadians are discouraged and now truckers from Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick are protesting at the New Brunswick border against this drastic increase in the price of gasoline. Some of them even think they may have to hand over their trucks to the banks.

Will the federal government finally act, or will it wait until the situation becomes a national crisis?

This was the answer of the Secretary of State for International Financial Institutions:

Mr. Speaker, it is true that the price of oil has actually doubled since last year. Taxes went up by only 1 cent.

This is not the problem for people buying gasoline. The problem is not taxes, but the fact the price of oil has doubled.

I never mentioned taxes in my question. What I asked was if the government intended to act. I asked the government to take action because, as we all know, it has responsibilities.

We know the cost to truckers, not only those of New Brunswick but everywhere else in Canada, to drive their truck and work day after day. For instance, they had to go to the New Brunswick border. How many truckers in Quebec were forced to organize protests because of oil prices?

I asked why the federal government did not take action like, for instance, the Government of Prince Edward Island. The federal government is going to say that it is not its responsibility, that it is the provinces' responsibility.

My question dealt with the fact that the federal government could have co-ordinated national meetings. It was unacceptable, in our country, to see how oil companies reacted when the price increased. On weekends, the price of gas was high, on weekdays, it was lower. It changed every day. In my book, that is almost like stealing.

But, speaking of taxes, I will give an example. In the Atlantic provinces, the government brought in the harmonized tax. Before that tax, people in New Brunswick did not pay tax on heating oil. After that tax was introduced, even the poorest people had to pay tax on heating oil.

The federal government can work with the provinces and reach agreements to help people. It did not do that. In fact, it did the opposite.

The answer I got to my question was that it was just a one cent increase. In my question, I did not talk about taxes. But since we are on that subject, I will tell the government that it can do better than that, that it can remove the GST on heating oil, that it can help Canadians, that it can do something and also that it can join with the provinces in telling oil companies that this is unacceptable in our country.

It is unfortunate that I do not have more time. I just wanted to raise this issue and show how the government is out of touch with

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the people. Again, it missed a golden opportunity. But, what can one say, it is a Liberal government after all.

**Mr. Roy Cullen (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to respond today to the arguments presented by the hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst on the effects of the gas and diesel oil price increases on consumers and on the Canada trucking industry.

● (1910)

First I want to point out that recent gas and diesel oil price increases in Canada are directly due to the fact that international crude oil prices have almost tripled since the end of 1998.

Although the federal government does not control crude oil prices, under an agreement signed in 1995 with Alberta, British Columbia and Saskatchewan, it closely monitors the conditions and competition practices on the oil markets under the Competition Act.

The increase in oil prices is probably temporary. OPEP ministers will meet to discuss the possibility of increasing supply, which would reduce prices.

Nevertheless, I can assure hon. members that the Canadian government, as one of the 24 members of the International Energy Agency, will co-operate with its international partners to ensure stable international oil markets.

As for Canadians truckers, they will benefit from the tax relief measures provided for individuals as well as businesses in the February 2000 budget.

[English]

## FOREIGN AFFAIRS

**Mr. Gordon Earle (Halifax West, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Canada must not in any way be party to nuclear arms buildups or to actions which may lead to a cold war environment. Canada must loudly and proudly say no to the U.S. proposed national missile defence system. On behalf of the federal NDP I urge the government to take a stand sooner rather than later.

I raised the question of our participation in the system on March 16. The Minister of National Defence stated:

We cannot yet take a position. There are too many unknowns.

I could not believe my ears. Of course we can take a stand. We should take a stand and we must take a stand.

The minister is also fully aware that DND started work on a \$637 million project to provide Canada with a foothold in the arms buildup strategy of the U.S. This expenditure involves putting military surveillance sensors in space. The U.S. treats Canada like

the 51st state and the Liberal government reacts like a whipped dog.

The U.S. threw down its gauntlet in comments from U.S. deputy defence secretary in a speech to the Calgary Chamber of Commerce when he said:

We are at an important pivot point in our relationship with each other. Unfortunately I think that pivot point is going to revolve around the issue of national missile defence. Canada needs to take the lead.

This is an explicit threat from where I sit: either do what the U.S. says or we will suffer. I am shocked that the government did not respond to this thinly veiled threat. The foreign affairs minister said on March 22:

Unilateral efforts to build defences against these dangers are unlikely to provide lasting security, and might quite possibly increase insecurity.

The impulse to build walls should be resisted. The answer instead lies in creating a multilateral approach to stop missile proliferation in the first place.

On the other hand we have the minister of defence meekly stating:

We cannot yet take a position. There are too many unknowns.

Now, however, it seems as if the big defence corporations and the U.S. brass have given our minister of defence marching orders. More recently he is making statements which seem very much to suggest that NORAD is anything but a joint Canada-U.S. defence command and is in reality an easy way for the U.S. to tell us to heel and to roll over.

This is a serious matter. Canada's role in international affairs hangs in the balance. I ask the Liberal government for an answer to my question. Whose words rule the Liberal roost? Is it those of the defence minister or the foreign affairs minister? I ask the Prime Minister to make a public statement on Canada's opposition to the U.S. government's plans to crank up the arms race with this national missile system.

The defence minister says there are too many unknowns. Allow me to clarify the picture for him a little. The defence minister of France, Alain Richard, has said the threat of ballistic missile attack is sometimes hyped or exaggerated. Military affairs analyst John Clearwater said of the proposed system:

It is money down the toilet. . . any rogue country shooting a missile at the U.S. knows it will be wiped out.

This insane missile plan will destabilize the current state of arms control. Even the conservative *Globe and Mail* stated that Canada should deny U.S. support on this measure.

There is no question the U.S. is consciously heading on a collision course with Russia, despite Russia's most recent positive efforts at ratifying the START II, the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. The NMD totally contradicts

the 1972 ABM Treaty with Russia. The U.S. would have to withdraw from or violate the treaty.

Canada has the duty and the responsibility of playing a leadership role. The U.S. plans to fuel the arms race and to destabilize international relations must be actively opposed.

• (1915 )

The government has a choice. It can continue to invest in this U.S. missile system and act like the 51st state or it can take a clear and strong stand against something that is fundamentally wrong and do so with pride.

The Liberals are perched on a very high and narrow fence and Canadians are waiting to see on which side of the fence they will fall. If the government falls on the side of complicity with the U.S. NMD system through silence on the matter or through open support, then all of Canada will be hurt in this fall. The pain will also be felt by those in other countries looking to Canada to play a leadership role.

**Mr. Roy Cullen (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the most fundamental point about the national missile defence program is that it is a U.S. program. The United States has not yet decided to deploy it and the U.S. government has not officially invited Canada to participate.

Work has continued in the U.S. on ballistic missile defence since the start of the star wars program in the mid-eighties. A national missile defence system, NMD, would be based on Earth and not in space although space sensors would be used to detect and track missile launches. An NMD system would launch from the ground an unarmed projectile called a kill vehicle that would intercept an incoming missile and destroy it by the sheer force of impact. As currently planned, NMD would counter an attack by a limited number of missiles and warheads.

The proponents of NMD in the U.S. argue that the emerging threat caused by the proliferation of missiles and weapons of mass destruction technology is a new factor, that the old bipolar world no longer exists and that U.S. security is being undermined. A rogue state with an ICBM, an intercontinental ballistic missile, could limit American foreign policy options by blackmailing future American governments. Its intelligence estimates indicate that states of concern could develop such a capability within the next five to 10 years.

On July 23, 1999 President Clinton signed the National Missile Defence Act which states that an NMD system will be deployed when technologically feasible. The deployment decision has not yet been taken and might not be taken by this or even a succeeding administration.

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When he signed the National Missile Defence Act into law, President Clinton stressed that a final decision to deploy a NMD system would take place only after a deployment readiness review had been completed. He also set out the following criteria that would govern a deployment decision: whether the threat is materializing; the status of the technology; whether the system is affordable; and national security considerations, including arms control and disarmament regimes, relations with Russia and the impact of the decision on allies.

The target date for this review is now July. While a decision to deploy could be taken as early as August this year, it would be some years before any—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland):** I am sorry to interrupt but the member's time has expired. The hon. member for Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar.

### NATIONAL PARKS

**Mr. Dennis Gruending (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, in March a panel on Canada's national parks released a landmark report which called for the re-establishment of ecological integrity as the guiding principle for parks management in the future. Rightly so.

National parks were originally created out of a desire to preserve some of our natural beauty for people to enjoy. In fact it was in 1885 when Canada established one of the first national parks in the world, Rocky Mountain National Park or Banff as we call it today.

The vision and the commitment of countless Canadians to preserve some small part of our natural heritage is best put to words appropriately enough by the authors of the first National Parks Act which was passed by the House of Commons in 1930:

Parks are hereby dedicated to the people of Canada for their benefit, education, and enjoyment. . . . Such parks shall be maintained and made use of so as to leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.

Sadly, this vision has become clouded. The value of our parks and their natural heritage has been reduced to a matter of dollars and cents by the government in particular. Our parks have suffered as a result.

The drive to generate revenue from park services puts an emphasis on the development of things like golf courses, hotels and even movie sets. At the same time services like park guides, wardens and the upkeep of camping facilities have been cut to the bone.

I want to use the example of Prince Albert National Park. In Prince Albert National Park the Narrows campground is a popular spot where many people take their families to camp each summer. Liberal government cuts have diverted resources away from the

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campground to the point where it is now in a shambles. The park has struggled to keep up the campground but last winter people were told that this summer they might have no modern toilets or fresh water.

• (1920 )

The Minister of Canadian Heritage embraced the blue ribbon panel on parks. She told me that we have to get our ecological house in order before we go to the Minister of Finance for more money. She told me that in the House earlier this year. That is fine and good but I sincerely hope the minister is not simply using this report as an excuse to delay reinvestment in services. Services consistent with the spirit of ecological integrity should have their funding restored and restored right away.

The expert panel's report acknowledges that the concept of human use and enjoyment is fundamentally linked with national parks, but this human use and enjoyment is under attack. As I have mentioned it is under attack in the Narrows campground where people are not going to get even the basic services which they really deserve and have used for years. This is not an attack on the integrity of the park. This use has coexisted with the integrity of the park for many years. Why should people who are prepared to make responsible use of the park have to wait for basic maintenance?

The minister has not issued an edict to stop the use of pesticides on golf greens or hotel lawns within the borders of the parks, nor should she allow Liberal cutbacks and neglect to shut down simple campground services.

One wonders what the minister might be waiting for. I certainly hope it is not another federal election and more red book promises to provide funding required to begin the process of preserving our parks for future generations.

Responsible use without abuse and experience in the parks are goals we all share. Ecological integrity must be our long term goal and it must come before profit, before greed and before politics.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Mauril Bélanger (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, basically, we agree with a great deal of what the hon. member has just said.

The government has introduced Bill C-27, the purpose of which is to establish ecological integrity as a basic and priority principle, and to proclaim loud and clear that this is a basic principle we consider of the utmost importance.

I hope members of all parties opposite will support this very important bill now before the House, because it shows that the government is committed to implementing the report of the panel on ecological integrity and to create eight new parks. This is in contradiction with some of the remarks of the hon. member

opposite, to the effect that the government does not intend to keep its word and complete the national parks network.

We hope hon. members will support this bill, as the NDP critic seemed to indicate, because it meets the legitimate aspirations of Canadians, who want to preserve our national parks for future generations.

[*English*]

## FISHERIES

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to once again rise in the House to discuss a very serious matter on the Atlantic coast with regard to the fishing industry and the recent case of *R. v. Marshall*.

I asked the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans a couple of weeks ago basically what the government was doing to ensure common peace in our waters as the May 1 lobster season opens in Atlantic Canada. The minister said that the government is looking at all avenues and almost half out of 34 bands in the area have reached either agreements or agreements in principle after the Marshall decision and that was a positive sign in that regard.

The question which still needs to be asked is what about the other half of the other bands which have not yet come to an agreement? It has caused discord between the non-aboriginal communities and the aboriginal communities throughout Atlantic Canada on exactly who is fishing what, when, where, how and who is actually mandated to regulate the industry to ensure that precautionary principles and conservation principles apply in each and every single term.

I have great respect for the hon. member for Labrador, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans. I would ask him in his rebuttal to this query to put the bureaucratic notes down that he received from the DFO office and speak to the House as the member for Labrador, which I know he is very good and capable of doing.

• (1925 )

I know that in the end he stands up for the fishing communities of his riding. That is why he has been elected and why there is a good chance he will be re-elected. However, I can assure him if he continues to speak from bureaucratic notes from a department that has destroyed the stocks throughout Atlantic Canada and western Canada, his prospects of being re-elected will get slimmer every time. That is my bit of election 101 advice for the parliamentary secretary.

The fact is what the communities need to know and what the five provinces and even Nunavut need to know is does the government have a long term strategy in place to integrate the aboriginal



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communities on a long term basis? Right now the agreements are short term only. Negotiations will be ongoing in the future.

We all know that elections happen. Ministers go through the Department of Fisheries and Oceans like it has a revolving door. Who is to say that certain strategies may not change as we go along? This uncertainty is scaring a lot of fishermen, especially a lot of independent fishermen in Atlantic Canada.

The lobster fishery is the last independent fishery in Atlantic Canada. The groundfish stocks are gone or have been corporatized. The crab stocks are more or less into area management zones now. The larger crab dealers in the Gaspé for example have control of the crabs. Lobsters are the last independent resource for an independent living for lobster fishermen.

Does the government have a long term plan to protect the resource and the livelihood of all fishermen in Atlantic Canada?

**Mr. Lawrence D. O'Brien (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is indeed quite gratifying to hear the comments from my colleague and great friend. I salute his mom once again for a great breakfast in Richmond, B.C.

I will say this much to the hon. member. While I did come fully prepared to speak with notes today, I will make him a promise that the next time I make an adjournment debate speech, I will speak without prepared notes. That is a fact. I will make my points and I will make them the way he did which was in a most compelling way. However, I have the pleasure right now to speak from notes.

It is my pleasure to speak about the progress that has been made to accommodate aboriginal peoples in Atlantic Canada pursuant to the Supreme Court of Canada's Marshall decision of November 1999.

The conditions are coming into place for a successful, orderly and regulated fishery in the maritimes and Quebec. We have now made interim fishing agreements or agreements in principle with over half of the aboriginal communities. We expect that most of these will be in place by June.

We listened to the voices of the fishing industry who asked that a voluntary licence retirement program be used to make room for aboriginal fishers in the commercial fishery. We initiated such a program over three months ago and have received some 1,400 applications and have acquired over 350 licences so far.

The approach is working well and we are matching supply and demand. The overall number of aboriginal entrants remains low relative to the total of 23,000 vessels and 44,000 fishermen—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland):** Order, please. The hon. member has too many notes.

## HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

**Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, it has been four months since Canadians first learned that the Liberal government bungled \$1 billion of their tax dollars. That is a disturbing thought for the millions of hardworking Canadians who just filed their tax returns.

Since then there has not been a single resignation, there has not been a cabinet shuffle, and there has not even been an admission of guilt. Instead Canadians have been subjected to a steady stream of arrogant abuse from the government.

The Prime Minister tells us he is only doing a good job as an MP, despite numerous RCMP investigations into HRDC grants in his riding.

● (1930)

We have discovered that one Liberal member after another benefited from well timed government grants. In a glaring conflict of interest the HRDC minister approved three grants totalling over \$700,000 in her own riding which went against the rules of the transitional jobs fund. Even more shocking was the news that she had approved an additional \$840,000 in grants the day after her officials told her about the bungled funds.

Every week new details surface about more improprieties in how the HRDC grant money was doled out. Just this week we heard how the Deputy Prime Minister took advantage of Canadian taxpayers by directing \$1.6 million into his riding and skirting the rules by spending only a paltry 20% of the funds on wages for employees.

The government fails to understand that the money it so callously threw around is not its money. It enrages Canadians when they realize that the government has yet to understand this concept, continuing to bungle billions of tax dollars on boondoggle spending while hardworking Canadians suffer because of deteriorating health care systems.

Instead of treating this health care emergency the Liberals patted themselves on the back, increasing the 2000 budget for federal grants and contributions by a further \$1.5 billion.

The Canadian Alliance believes that Canadians would rather see money spent on improving the quality of health care than see it lining the pockets of the Prime Minister's friends. We believe that

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this funding is better spent upgrading the quality of health care. We are deeply concerned about the future of our health care system. No one wants to see people suffer when they fall ill. No one wants an American style health care system in Canada. We believe that health care should not be based on financial status and that all Canadians should have timely access to essential health care services.

When we form government we will provide greater freedom of choice when it comes to ensuring well-being and access to medical care and medical facilities. We believe that the needs of patients must come first in the delivery of health services. We will work together with the provinces so that they have the resources and flexibility to find more effective approaches to the financing, management and delivery of health care, thereby ensuring that patient choice and quality of care are maximized.

It is time for the government to go. It becomes clearer every day that the government is incapable of offering solutions to these problems. It has become detached from the concerns of Canadians and cares only about feeding its own inflated ego.

Canadians can be assured that the Canadian Alliance is ready and willing to tackle the ongoing problems of high taxes and substandard health care. We can no longer afford to become complaisant as our country falls to pieces under the Liberal government.

How much longer will long suffering, overtaxed Canadians have to put up with this Liberal arrogance instead of getting reasonable value for their tax dollars?

**Ms. Bonnie Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, when the hon. member first asked his question in the House he referred to a specific grant. At that time the minister invited him to provide us with the details of the story he was telling. She promised to look

into the matter and provide him with an adequate response. However he did not bring it forward.

I was not surprised because he is continuing on with the style of the party he represents. That involves presenting incomplete information and leaving innuendoes, giving Canadians the impression of wrongdoing on the part of the government.

One thing that is consistent is that members of that party never have any proof. When invited to bring forward information in order that an investigation can be launched, they never bring their information forward. This suggests to me that they want their accusations and their innuendoes to hang in the air, poisoning the trust of Canadians in their government, eroding the traditional bond of trust that has existed between Canadians and their government and is the basis of civilized behaviour in this country. This is irresponsible. If taken to the extreme, if Canadians believed these innuendoes, it could lead to social chaos.

Why would they be doing this? The reason is that they want Canadians not to have faith in sending their tax dollars to Ottawa. Why is that? It is because their rich friends want their taxes reduced. They want the government to have less money to provide the kinds of programs that HRDC provides so well to Canadians who do not have so much, Canadians who do not have jobs, Canadians with disabilities, unemployed Canadians.

We need tax dollars to provide those programs to give all Canadians the dignity of work and the dignity of a life that is as comfortable as most other Canadians have.

[*Translation*]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland):** The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7.35 p.m.)

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