● (1130)

My family comes from Norway. Off the coast of Norway today is the same kind of activity that we have. Oil companies explore for gas and oil in a similar milieu to what we find off our East Coast. Norway has a different system from what we have. Norway does not have PIP grants. Just by way of background, Mr. Speaker, our PIP grants provide up to 80 per cent financing by the taxpayers of Canada. As a matter of fact, Sir, if you take advantage of some of the other tax incentives you could have about 95 per cent of the total exploration and development costs of these wells paid by the taxpayers of Canada.

Mr. Friesen: Most of them dry.

Mr. Riis: As one my colleagues has indicated, most of them end up being dry. However, that is the name of the game. But 95 per cent of the cost of drilling a $200 million well is borne by the taxpayers of Canada. If oil or natural gas is found, then Canadian taxpayers, for that 95 per cent investment, receive 25 per cent of the action, so to speak. Think of it for a moment in terms of the concept of accountability. We put up 95 per cent of the cost of developing a new oil rig, and if the oil companies are successful we, the taxpayers, receive 25 per cent of the action.

I mentioned Norway, Mr. Speaker, because the Norwegians are in a similar situation. They have a different approach. They say to the oil companies: "Come and explore in our offshore areas". The oil companies ask: "How much are we going to get from you? What is the enticement? What kind of incentive or bribe do we get to develop the offshore?" The answer is none—zero. No money. The Norwegians will not invest any money in exploration, but the oil companies are welcome to explore. They do.

All of the major oil companies around the world involved in exploration are involved in drilling off the coast of Norway. If they find oil or natural gas, they take about 80 per cent for no investment at all but just for the privilege of having oil companies find oil, develop it, and they get 20 per cent of the total action. They are all in there, Mr. Speaker; they all think it is a fine deal—Mobil Oil, Shell, Imperial Oil and so on. Can you imagine what they must think in the board rooms when they talk about Canada providing 95 per cent of the investment capital for 25 per cent of the action on a successful development?

When it comes to accountability, Members of Parliament have a responsibility. I do not think PIP grants reflect much accountability when we ask small businessmen, men and women, to provide the taxes that are required to keep our economy going and to keep our society and its social programs in place, while we throw away billions of dollars to one particular group. That is not being very accountable to those who have elected us to represent their best interests and have asked us to collect taxes fairly and to invest the money wisely. It is a very sad comment on the accountability that we are seeing reflected here as Members of the House of Commons.

When we talk about accountability, we can talk about the accountability which must be improved as it touches the private sector, particularly through our taxation system and all of the incentives that we give to the corporate sector and to Crown corporations. Our concern within the New Democratic Party is that Bill C-24 does not provide the accountability required. As a step in the right direction, however, I want to say that my colleague, the Hon. Member for Prince Albert (Mr. Hovdebo), who served on the agriculture committee, suggested when Canagrex was being debated that we needed to have a clause in the Canagrex Bill that provided the opportunity for the Auditor General to carry out a comprehensive audit on Canagrex whenever he deemed it to be appropriate.

That is the kind of accountability we would like to see in Bill C-24. We would like to see the Auditor General given the opportunity, as he or she sees fit, to carry out a comprehensive audit to ensure the taxpayers are getting a good return on their investment. We led the way on the Canagrex Bill to ensure that accountability was placed on that Crown corporation. It is the same type of accountability we would like to see now incorporated into Bill C-24.

We are concerned about the lack of a window into the subsidiaries of the Crown corporations, clearly absent from Bill C-24. We are also concerned about those Crown corporations that are non-commercial. I am thinking of the Canada Council, perhaps the CBC and the National Film Board. These are non-commercial ventures and Crown corporations. We are concerned that if they are to be incorporated somehow into the terms of reference of Bill C-24, that kind of government involvement in the Canada Council would be inappropriate for the cultural community of Canada. It would be inappropriate for the Government to be so closely involved with the cultural community and cultural developments of our nation.

We are opposed to Bill C-24 in its present form. We are especially concerned about the lack of accountability built into this Bill when it comes to Crown corporations.

Mr. Benno Friesen (Surrey-White Rock-North Delta): Mr. Speaker, it is somewhat of a pleasure again to speak on this measure. Bill C-24 would institutionalize the proliferation of Crown corporations in Canada.

In beginning my remarks, I think it is important to have some historical perspective about Crown corporations. The Canadian experience has been that Crown corporations have played a very important role in our development. With the kind of geography we share in our land with something like 4,000 miles of border, six different time zones, a sparse population in many regions, and because of the different problems we have, Crown corporations have been created over the years. I think all of us would concede that without the construction of the CNR and the CPR as binding forces for our country, Canada could not have developed over the years as it has. Something like 50 years ago we had the formation of the CBC, the National Film Board, and some of the cultural agencies which helped to launch industries in Canada at a time when the private sector was not in a position to cover that