Then they tell us that the federation is good for Quebecers. They try to make us feel guilty for wanting to leave such a nice family, a family that is so fair to one of its children. The facts speak for themselves, and eloquently so. For five years, the federal government acted in an absolutely unfair manner towards Quebecers living in inadequate dwellings. Then, it totally withdrew its support to social housing. It did not care at all. The results are tragic for Quebec: an estimated $1.3 billion shortfall, taking into account existing needs.

In the meantime, our Ontario neighbours, who were so fond of us just before the referendum, took considerable advantage of the federal manna. Now, let us look at figures. In 1991–92, Quebec received 19.3 per cent of the expenditures of the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation. Ontario got 34 per cent. This is a difference of 14.7 per cent. I am not making it up, these are the figures.

In 1992–93, the difference between Quebec and Ontario was 16.8 per cent and, in 1993–94, it was 14.1 per cent. As I said a few moments ago, the figures speak very clearly. For those in my riding with housing problems, the figures do not count for much. What counts is results. In their experience, public housing is becoming a very rare commodity, especially in Quebec.

My constituents know that, for many of them, public housing is often their only means of getting decent and affordable housing. The 4,300 single mothers waiting for public housing in my riding know this to be so and do not find the situation amusing. The federal government got out of public housing without transferring tax points in exchange. Quebec is now stuck, as is happening in more and more instances, with needs to fill and no money to do it. So much for their great federalism, we have no use for it.

• (1820)

[*English*]

Mr. Bill Gilmour (Comox—Alberni, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak on Bill C–108, an act to amend the National Housing Act.

Bill C–108 proposes to increase the aggregate amount of outstanding Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, CMHC, loan insurance from $100 billion to $150 billion, plus any additional amounts that may be authorized by Parliament. Put simply, Bill C–108 increases CMHC's liability limit by $50 billion.

Many members on the government side seem to think that $50 billion in liability is not a big deal and they are affronted that Reform is questioning the bill. They are in such a hurry that they pushed clause by clause consideration of Bill C–108 through standing committee in a record 30 seconds, a record 30 seconds for $50 billion. This is hardly the fiscally responsible approach that Canadians expect from their government.

Our deficit continues to be a reality that will not go away until something constructive is done. The debt load that each taxpayer has to carry is immobilizing the nation. Yet the Liberals continue to overspend. The Liberals are not cutting back; they are spending more. For example, last year alone their spending increased by $2.8 billion.

The national debt is presently at $566 billion and is increasing every second. Canadians are so strapped with debt that they cannot move forward. It is little wonder, given this situation, that the housing market has slowed to a crawl in Canada. The average person simply does not have the money or financial security required to invest in a long term mortgage. Increasing the loan liabilities for CMHC will not change the hard financial reality that many Canadians are facing today.

The government promised jobs and it promised deficit reduction. Yet Canadians are facing higher unemployment and more taxes. Things are not getting better, and the government refuses to make the changes necessary to turn things around.

The Liberals are still practising the same old politics that got Canada into this deficit in the first place. Liberals are spending, buying jobs, artificially propping up private industry and messing up private markets. All this does is drive us deeper into debt.

Increasing the CMHC liability limit for insuring mortgages is nothing more than government speculation without money. The government has done this on several occasions. For example, Bill C–91 expanded the loan liability of the Federal Business Development Bank from approximately $4 billion to $22 billion. Bill C–75 increased government loan liability for farm improvement and marketing co–operative loans from $1.5 billion to $3 billion. Outstanding loans under the Small Business Loans Act rose from $3 billion to $6 billion in 1995 and is now up to $12 billion. This is only a small segment of Liberal initiatives to increase federal loan liability.

Although liabilities may not involve borrowing money, they are a risk that if defaulted will cost taxpayers money. The government has grown accustomed to handing out grants left, right and centre. Accordingly government liability simply increases our chances of going deeper into debt.

In addition, Canadians should be particularly concerned that the government does not know what its outstanding liabilities are at this time. CMHC could not tell me its outstanding liability at this time or 10 or 15 years down the road. This is not acceptable.

Liabilities are risks. When mortgages are defaulted these liabilities fall back on the taxpayer. When the bill was in the House for second reading a few weeks ago, Reform members asked the Liberals again and again who pays on defaulted mortgages.