

S. O. 31

[Translation]

EXPO 2005

Mr. Eugène Bellemare (Carleton—Gloucester, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week the Bloc Québécois member for Rimouski—Témiscouata stated that Hull was the ugliest city in the world. What a pleasure it is to hear that the hon. member is now spreading the message far and wide to the people of Hull that she is retracting her remarks and that she wants all who will listen, particularly her new friend the Minister of Canadian Heritage, to know that she supports Hull's application for Expo 2005.

This means that people from around the world could come and see the phenomenon of a city transformed into a friendly, welcoming community in the space of a week, thanks to the Bloc members. Is this a sign that the separatists have finally chosen a date for the referendum—2005?

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QUEBEC REFERENDUM

Mr. Gaston Leroux (Richmond—Wolfe, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Canadian Heritage does not share the opinion of the Minister of Labour when it comes to the announcement, yesterday, by the Premier of Quebec, that the referendum will not be held in the spring. The heritage minister confirmed that he and the Prime Minister did not wish that the referendum be held before the summer.

However, the labour minister, responsible for the federal involvement in the referendum battle, said she was surprised and disappointed that the referendum on Quebec sovereignty would not be held before the summer. Clearly, cabinet ministers are divided on the subject. However, they should be reminded that this decision belongs to the Government of Quebec, and the Premier is at liberty to set the date when this important consultation for the future of Quebec and Quebecers will be held, no matter what the labour minister might think.

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[English]

BILL C-68

Mr. Jack Ramsay (Crowfoot, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Justice, with the support of the Liberal caucus, demonstrated his blatant disregard for the principles of democracy that govern this country.

The opposition Liberals ranted and raved when the GST debates were cut off and the ill-conceived tax was shoved down the throats of Canadians. Now what did they do? Follow the Mulroney lead.

First, the Minister of Justice publicly proclaimed that the gun legislation would not be determined by a head count. Then, on introducing Bill C-68, he said the consultation process was over.

The Speaker: Colleagues, we are all aware of the traditions of the House that we do not refer in any way to a vote that has been taken in the House. I would hope that the hon. member is not going in that direction. May I gently caution the hon. member not to mention any votes, reflect on any votes, or the way members voted in the House.

Mr. Ramsay: Mr. Speaker, let us not forget that while the Liberals rammed through the bill—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Haldimand—Norfolk.

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CANADIAN POLICE INFORMATION CENTRE

Mr. Bob Speller (Haldimand—Norfolk, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is estimated that 42,000 Canadian children are sexually abused annually. Last November the Minister of Justice and the Solicitor General announced changes to the Canadian Police Information Centre.

• (1415)

I commend the ministers for their positive improvements. Unfortunately, even though the database is available, there is no obligation to access it. At the moment the process is cumbersome.

Another serious problem is the granting of pardons for those convicted of sex offences against children. Tens of thousands of Canadians have signed petitions and letters asking for additional laws to protect our children. Many of these will be presented today after question period by Monica Rainey, founder and executive director of the Citizens Against Child Exploitation.

In light of the urgent plight of Canadian children, I urge the Minister of Justice to implement a mandatory certificate of clearance system and immediately investigate the option of amending the Criminal Records Act to prohibit pardons for those convicted of sex offences involving children under the age of 18.

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[Translation]

QUEBEC REFERENDUM

Mr. Martin Cauchon (Outremont, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Premier of Quebec officially announced, yesterday, that he was postponing the referendum until the fall. The leader of the Parti Québécois is telling us that he has no use for the report by the National Commission on Quebec sovereignty which is to be tabled on April 13.