

Private Members' Business

[English]

Mr. Bertrand:—approximately .4 per cent of the gross national product. This represents close to \$3 billion. Is the hon. member for Verchères prepared to accept that magnitude of burden on the economy?

• (1130)

As our economy has started to emerge from the depths of a devastating recession, can we afford to introduce a measure that risks reducing overall productivity and GNP while increasing the need for overtime work?

In our increasingly globalized economy can we afford to introduce another statutory holiday when our competitors are not doing the same? Surely the hon. member for Verchères recognizes that Canadian industry must strive to remain competitive and that the addition of a new national holiday would add a significant cost to doing business.

[Translation]

Thirdly, if we create a new national holiday, will the hon. member from Verchères not want the government to create programs to celebrate it? Where will we find the additional funds for that purpose?

I am not opposed to the idea of underlining the contribution of historical figures to the establishment of responsible government. Quite the contrary. Canada Day already gives all Canadians the opportunity to stop a minute and think about the greatness of their country and the contribution made by every citizen.

[English]

Further, Canadian citizens have privately organized celebrations of a number of aspects of their heritage. Many Canadians have been celebrating Heritage Day for years on the third Monday in February. While not benefiting from a full day off, they have used the occasion to reflect on the cultural, architectural and social heritage as well as the political contributions of our citizens. May I suggest that those members interested in the celebration of responsible government use their position to organize private celebrations of our democratic heritage.

Our Canada Day programs provide Canadians with the focus for a national celebration each year. Should Canadians wish to additionally celebrate our democratic heritage on another day, I would suggest that this be organized at the local level providing considerable flexibility for Canadians to tailor their celebrations to their particular community.

[Translation]

Schools could also organize historical re-creations of the debates which surrounded the advent of responsible government. They could ask local historical societies or heritage

conservation groups to help them. None of these activities would require the creation of a new national holiday. The initiative would come from citizens wanting to promote and celebrate the tradition of democracy which they have inherited as they do for the celebrations surrounding Heritage Day.

Mr. Bergeron: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I bring to your attention citation 459 in Beauchesne's *parliamentary Rules* concerning the relevance of the arguments brought forward by my colleague from Pontiac—Gatineau—Labbelle. Obviously, my colleague has completely misread the motion before this House since the reference to Quebec's National Patriots' Day serves only to indicate that the government of Quebec has already formally recognized the historical contribution of the Patriotes and the Reformers to the establishment of responsible government in Canada and in Quebec.

Our aim is simply to give the Canadian government the opportunity of choosing the way it wants to recognize this historical contribution. The aim of this motion is merely to get the Canadian government to recognize this contribution.

I think this debate has been seriously sidetracked.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): I merely wished to remind the Member that, first, the motion is entitled National Patriots' Day.

Second, citation 459 of Beauchesne which he mentioned says:
 Relevance is not easy to define. In borderline cases, the Member should be given the benefit of the doubt, although the Speaker has frequently admonished Members who have strayed in debate.

• (1135)

I would also like to remind the member that, were the rule of relevance strictly applied, this House would have serious problems.

Mr. Bergeron: Madam Speaker, I would like to bring to your attention—and I think it is important to do so now—that I did not suggest the title National Patriots' Day. It was made up by the people working on *Hansard*, I think, or by the private members' business office, who interpreted the motion to have this meaning. I insist on repeating in the House, if I may, that this is—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member. If he finds the title given to his motion unacceptable, he can go to the Clerk of the House of Commons who will help him change it, if necessary.

[English]

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat): Madam Speaker, I appreciate very much the opportunity to speak to this motion. It is very important that Canadians remember their history and that from time to time there be occasions for considering what has gone before.