

Government Orders

• (1115)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): I thank the hon. member for Comox—Alberni for his intervention. It is certainly in the spirit of unanimous consent knowing that we do have some restriction given the statement by the member for Medicine Hat that he had other obligations when they accepted the unanimous consent.

Without further ado I would simply ask—

Ms. Guarnieri: I have a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): All we are doing at this point is using up valuable time. I simply ask the parliamentary secretary if she could possibly put the question so I might allow a reasonable amount of time for the member to respond.

Ms. Guarnieri: Mr. Speaker, Mr. McAvity, who represents 2,000 not for profit museums in Canada, said: "We are very pleased to be here today in support of these amendments. The museum community has been patiently waiting for these amendments for several years". He went on to say: "This legislation was universally applauded by Canadian museums as it brought our community in line with those of many other western nations whose governments have been supporting the enrichment of public collections through similar legislation for years". Mr. McAvity went on to say even more resoundingly that the Canadian Museums Association came before the committee to voice its wholehearted endorsement of these amendments.

Given all of the above, does the hon. member think he has more expertise than those individuals to judge what is good for Canadian museums? I thank the hon. member for his patience in allowing me to put the question.

Mr. Solberg: Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member was taking advantage of my good nature a little bit, but that is okay.

I will acknowledge that there are a couple of paragraphs on pages 18 and 19 that do explain fairly specifically that the export review board has to judge an object to be of outstanding significance and national importance because of its close association with Canadian history or national life, aesthetic qualities and value in the study of the arts or sciences in order to be eligible to be designated for a tax deduction. The fact is that \$60 million worth of those are designated every year. That is a tremendous amount of money, as the hon. parliamentary secretary would know.

The parliamentary secretary was asking me about Mr. McAvity and the museum association and was pointing out that the museums like the legislation. Of course they do. They have unfettered access to all kinds of things with no budget. They do not have a budget. The museums can basically say: "We would like that work of art or that artefact. We will take it to the review board and get it to tell us what it is worth and whether it is

significant. When the board does that, then we get it". It is that easy.

The only one who pays is the taxpayer. It is certainly good for the artist or the person who is donating it because he or she gets that big tax credit. It is certainly good for the museums. Why would they have any problem with this? They probably love this stuff. It is profoundly not good for taxpayers who have to take it in the pocket every time one of these donations is made.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kilger): I thank all members who participated in this extension of the debate for their co-operation.

Mr. John Harvard (Winnipeg St. James, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, before I get into the main body of my speech, I would like to proffer a couple of comments relative to what was said by the hon. member for Medicine Hat.

I did not listen to all of his speech but I did hear a chunk of it. On two different occasions he described the legislation as being horrible and innocuous. I would think the hon. member would find some disparity between those two adjectives, innocuous and horrible.

After listening to him I suspect he probably thinks the legislation is more horrible than it is innocuous despite the fact that this is anything but sweeping legislation. It really is what we might call a technical bill to put back into legislation a review and appeal mechanism, something that was inadvertently left out in 1991.

• (1120)

Again, in commenting on observations made by the hon. member for Medicine Hat, it is quite clear he believes that the free market system can do the job. At one point in his speech he said that we just do not need this kind of legislation at all. He was not only referring to providing an appeal mechanism or a review mechanism; he was talking about the entire system of public support for donations of Canadian heritage to museums.

We would have to be dreaming. We would have to be in full flight of fantasy to believe the museums would do as well without this legislation. Without this incentive, without this kind of legislation, many of the donations to the museums across the country, and we are talking about more than 2,000 institutions, would dry up. This was forcefully put to the committee of which I have the honour to chair by witnesses a few days back.

Let us not fool anybody. This legislation is absolutely necessary. The comments by the hon. member for Medicine Hat truly reveal what the so-called Reform Party feels about supporting cultural institutions and specifically museums. Reform members simply do not support public support at all which is wrong headed. It is a mistake and is not something that is shared by the Canadian public.

I listened to the hon. member and he seemed to plead on behalf of taxpayers, as if he spoke for all taxpayers. While many