



CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Tuesday, February 15, 2005**

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**Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, February 15, 2005

The House met at 10 a.m.

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*Prayers*

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)

[*Translation*]

### COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT, SKILLS DEVELOPMENT, SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE STATUS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

**Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the third report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development, Skills Development, Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities entitled: Restoring Financial Governance and Accessibility in the Employment Insurance Program.

This report calls for the creation of a new EI fund that will be dedicated exclusively to EI, will have the capacity to maintain premium rate stability and will be managed by an independent EI commission that is broadly representative of EI contributors.

• (1005)

### FINANCE

**Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Finance on Bill C-33, a second act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 23, 2004, which agreed on Thursday, February 10, 2005, to report it without amendment.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

### DIVORCE ACT

**Hon. Roger Gallaway (Sarnia—Lambton, Lib.)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-334, an act to amend the Divorce Act (child of the marriage).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce this bill, an act to amend the Divorce Act, child of the marriage.

The bill is about the legal obligation imposed by the Divorce Act on divorced parents to pay child support for their children who are older than the age of majority and who are in fact adults at law. The

bill would address that category of persons now inappropriately styled as adult children. The term “adult children” is an impossible legal concept that is only possible in family law and creates adults with rights greater than other adults.

I am certain many members of the House would want to adjust those rights.

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

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### PETITIONS

#### MARRIAGE

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition signed by a number of Canadians, including from my own riding of Mississauga South, concerning the definition of marriage.

As we all know, the majority of Canadians believe that the fundamental matters of social policy should be decided by elected members of Parliament and not by the unelected judiciary.

It also is the duty of Parliament to ensure that marriage is defined as Canadians wish it to be defined. Therefore the petitioners call upon Parliament to use all possible legislative and administrative measures, including the invocation of section 33 of the charter, the notwithstanding clause if necessary, to preserve and protect the current definition of marriage as the legal union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.

**Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure on behalf of the citizens of Prince George—Peace River, and particularly residents of Fort St. John, my home town, to present a petition on their behalf concerning marriage.

The petitioners note that the House passed a motion in June 1999 that called for marriage to continue to be recognized as the union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others. They further note that currently the institution and definition of marriage is under attack and therefore they call upon Parliament to recognize in federal legislation the institution of marriage as being the lifelong union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.

\* \* \*

### QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

*Supply*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1010)

[*English*]

### OPPOSITION MOTION—CHILD CARE FUNDING

**Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC)** moved:

That the House call upon the government to address the issue of child care by fulfilling its commitment to reduce taxes for low and modest income families in the upcoming budget, and, so as to respect provincial jurisdiction, ensure additional funds for child care are provided directly to parents.

He said: Mr. Speaker, our members will be splitting their times and I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar.

I am pleased today to introduce a motion calling for the government to honour its throne speech commitment to reduce taxes for lower and modest income Canadian families.

[*Translation*]

We also urge the government to take advantage of the coming budget to keep its promise on child care, while respecting provincial areas of jurisdiction and meeting the needs of Canadian families.

[*English*]

We call upon the government to give any new funds for child care directly to parents themselves. This debate comes just after the government's apparent failure last week to reach a federal-provincial agreement on child care and it gives the government one more chance to get things right and act on 12 years of broken promises.

As we all know, the Liberal Party has been promising Canadians a national child care program since 1993, so the recycling of this promise in the 2004 election was no surprise. However there is one major reason that the Liberal vision of child care will inevitably fail. In listening only to the government funded experts, who dominate the child care debate, the government has completely lost touch with the needs and aspirations of Canadian parents.

Parents have made it clear that they want choice and empowerment when it comes to deciding how they can best take care of their children.

A recent survey by the Vanier Institute of the Family asked parents to rank a series of possible child care options. Parents' first choice for raising their children was their spouse or partner. Second was a grandparent. Third was another relative. Fourth was home-based day care. Fifth was institutional day care. Finally there was the option of babysitting by friends or a hired sitter.

But the message is clear: parents want choices and they want to make those choices themselves. Yet the government's preferred option is to make the choice for them, to take parents' tax dollars and plough all available money into one option, that of supporting institutional day care centres, an option that parents themselves rank fifth out of six.

I would be remiss if I did not mention that I am a parent myself, with two young children. They are now in the early years of school and have just passed through the more intensive years of preschool care. Laureen and I chose a healthy mix of various day care options for our children. Some of this care was provided directly by their mother, especially in the first year and a half. We also have used close relatives. We have employed caregivers and, for a number of years, Benjamin and Rachel attended a regulated, institutional day care centre on a part time basis. For us, fortunately, all of these experiences have been good experiences, but for us the key has been choice, and in this party we want to ensure that a similar range of choices is available to and affordable for all parents.

It is certainly a mistake to assume that parents with choices would overwhelmingly select regulated, institutional, not for profit child care. This is not the experience elsewhere. Finland, for example, provides high quality, municipally run day care centres, but it also offers a monthly home care allowance for parents who choose to take an extended leave of absence from work in order to care for their children. The evidence shows that almost 70% of parents with children under three choose home care, while only 11% choose formal day care centres.

This brings me back to the other issue we raised in our motion today. Parents with children often indicate that they would prefer to stay at home or work part time in order to care for their children, yet at the same time a high percentage of parents with young children both work outside the home, often full time. I have no doubt that some of those parents would prefer and do prefer access to quality institutional day care, but what these facts tell us is that a large number of those parents would prefer to stay at home, work only part time and spend more time with their children were they able to do so.

Is it not possible that part of the reason so many parents with young children work outside the home is that our tax system makes it all but impossible for them to do otherwise?

Canada is almost unique in the industrialized world in providing no tax benefits to married couples and almost no tax benefits to families with children, beyond a very low income threshold. Other countries provide tax benefits like income splitting between parents, an additional basic personal exemption for children, or universal per child tax credits or deductions. Canada provides nothing except for the universal national child benefit and tax deductions for institutional care.

The Conservative Party certainly supports the existing deductions and the national child benefit program and would like to see this enhanced, but the benefit program does not provide enough assistance for many lower income parents to be able to consider staying at home to raise their children, and it provides next to nothing for parents once they are in the middle income range.

*Supply*

Rather than devoting billions of dollars to a child care program that will help only a small group of parents, that will pay for structures rather than services, that will lead to even higher government spending and higher taxes for families, and that runs the risk of conflict with provincial governments, we urge the federal government to devote much of the money to cutting taxes for lower income and middle income Canadians, enhancing the existing tax credits for families with children, extending them to more families, and using tax relief and credits to help support those choices that Canadian parents want to make for their own children.

● (1015)

The tax system is completely within the jurisdiction of the federal government, so there is no need for complex negotiations or confrontation with provinces that may have different priorities.

[*Translation*]

The best division of the work, one respectful of Canada's federal nature, is what was agreed on when the National Child Benefit was created. In other words, let the provinces define the child care program they want, which may or may not include in regulated daycare spots, while the federal government provides financial support to parents and children through the tax system.

[*English*]

These changes could begin as early as next week's budget.

If the other parties in the House support this motion, it would be a strong signal to the government that it is time to end the pipe dream of a universal program of institutional child care and instead replace it with a universal program of supporting Canadian parents as they make their own choices for their own children.

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I understand the motion presented to the House today, it is calling for choice so that families can choose the type of care they want to provide for their children. On that basis, I am going to support the motion.

One of the first petitions I presented in the House had to do with income splitting in families so that one of the family could stay at home and care for preschool children. The petition stated that "managing the family home and caring for preschool children is an honourable profession which has not been recognized for its contribution to our society" and that unpaid work is still work and should be recognized.

In addition to the comments made, let me say that there is a child care expense deduction under the Income Tax Act which is available only to those who pay others to provide care for their children. I wonder if the Leader of the Opposition would also agree that this child care expense deduction should be changed to a credit which would be available to all families regardless of the form of care.

**Hon. Stephen Harper:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's comment and his question. As the member and I know well, there is an existing child care deduction for expenses, something that my family has availed itself of in the past.

The difficulty with that program is twofold. It is not simply that it supports only particular types of choices for child care, institutional choices, but as the member and others have pointed out in the past, it

also discriminates toward high income earners. Not only is it mostly available to those who can afford heavy child care costs, but obviously the value of a deduction is greatest when one's income is highest.

This party has proposed in the past to enhance those deductions along the lines of what the member said, by providing deductions or credits which would be given regardless of the type of child care chosen. Obviously, I think, we should be looking at systems that would move to credits and enhance these benefits across income ranges.

I would not want to do away with the existing tax deductions that people have come to rely on, and I am not sure the member is implying that, but I obviously would suggest giving a wider range of benefits and choices.

We all know the government has the surpluses necessary to provide this kind of tax relief. We know also that all parties agreed to an amendment to the throne speech to recognize the necessity of reducing family taxation, so I urge the government to bring in a wider range of tax relief for parents with children in order to recognize the deficiencies of the system that we have today.

● (1020)

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions and comments. The hon. member for Simcoe North.

**Mr. Tony Martin (Sault Ste. Marie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we in this party will certainly not be supporting the Conservative motion today because we think it will just put another nail in the coffin—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. I stated the wrong riding name for the hon. member because members have to be in their own seats in order to ask a question. I would encourage the hon. member to be in his own chair, and then we will start his question at that time.

**Mr. Tony Martin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am relatively new to this place and have seen on other occasions, perhaps under other rules, members sitting in different places and participating.

However, I want to repeat that we will not be supporting the resolution put forward by the Conservatives today because we think it will simply contribute to the growing gap between the rich and the poor and will fail to take advantage of the economic value that exists in good quality, not for profit, licensed child care.

I want to ask the opposition leader how he squares the circle in terms of this question of choice: between the women who do choose, 70% of them right now, to be out in the workplace, and the fact that we have huge lineups for licensed, registered, not for profit child care today in our country.

**Hon. Stephen Harper:** Mr. Speaker, I think the answer is simple: because the tax system encourages people, whether they want to or not, in that it penalizes them for staying at home and it encourages them to enter the workplace and then provides only one option. It is fairly obvious why one option has a lineup and other options, even if people express a preference for using them, are not as available.

*Supply*

As I said in my comments, I am not in any way quarrelling with the choice of institutional day care. It is a choice I have used myself quite frequently, but we want to make sure that the range of options is available to people at a range of income levels.

I would just say this to the member from the NDP. I do think that the stand of the NDP on this reflects why over time the NDP has lost so much support from ordinary people. Once again we have the NDP backing the vested interest of a system, in this case the institutional day care system, rather than actually being concerned with focusing on the fundamental needs of ordinary people, and that is child care. It is the child care needs we should be concerned about, and the children, not the system and those who provide it.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marcel Gagnon (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I have been listening since this debate began and I wonder where we are. My interest in politics began when Maurice Duplessis was in power. I do not know if this rings any bells for you, but it was during Quebec's dark ages. I have been listening to the Conservative Party and I feel as if we are taking a huge step backwards.

When child care is being discussed—

•(1025)

[*English*]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Excuse me, but this is not a point of order; this is debate, I believe. Unless there is a point of order in there that I have not heard, I ask the member to get directly to his point of order. Otherwise I believe he is engaging in debate.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marcel Gagnon:** I did not rise on a point of order. I wanted to ask the Leader of the Opposition a question.

[*English*]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The time for questions and comments has expired, unless there is unanimous consent to have another question. Is it agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** We will allow another question.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marcel Gagnon:** Mr. Speaker, thank you for letting me ask my question. I really thought that I still had some time. I am listening to the Conservative Party, and I listened to it throughout the election period, which is not so far behind us. I consider this to be a step backward.

They are talking about a universal child care system that encourages—and on this I agree with the NDP—discrimination between the rich and the poor. Quebec has established a day care system which, according to just about everyone in Quebec, is quite extraordinary: one that allows families, be they rich or poor, to enjoy the same benefits. So why go backward—why promote again a system that is 50 years behind the times?

**Hon. Stephen Harper:** Mr. Speaker, clearly the hon. member misunderstood what I said. I said that there is a system in the Province of Quebec. This motion does not oppose the power to set up such a system. That is a provincial choice. One of the reasons

why we are in favour of direct benefits to parents is to ensure that we do not impose an Ottawa policy on Quebec.

At the same time, the hon. member mentioned a former premier of Quebec—I do not know why—but I have to point out that I am a parent, whereas Mr. Duplessis never was.

[*English*]

**Mrs. Carol Skelton (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak today to an issue that affects Canadians in every area of this country. Raising children can be a challenge but changing demographics have only served to highlight these situations.

With new challenges come new problems and new opportunities.

Today, families can be blended, both parents usually work, families are separated from support systems by distances unseen just 25 years ago and many only have one parent.

No party in the House has a monopoly on care and love for children. No person in the House, no matter what party they come from, can be accused of not wanting the best for our children.

These matters are not up for debate. What is up for debate is the path we, as a government, can and should take to achieve what we believe is best for Canadian children.

Let me state what the biggest difference is between the Conservatives and other parties in the House on this matter.

The Conservative Party of Canada recognizes that parents are in the best position to determine the care needs of their children, not the federal government. Parents should be able to do so in an environment that encourages as many options as possible. The government should not be limiting options, but encouraging options. Any child care strategy must be achieved in a manner that does not discriminate against those who opt to raise their children in family, social, linguistic and religious environments. Parents must be given the freedom to choose what is best for their children, their families and their priorities.

Very importantly, we also recognize that the delivery of education and social services are provincial responsibilities under the Constitution. We intend to not only support the provinces, but to encourage the provinces to implement services that best serve their own citizens.

We believe that support should go to parents and families raising children, especially to lower and middle income parents. It is completely unfair for those needing assistance to hear that resources are limited, especially if they need help and see it going to those who do not need it.

All existing levels of support will be maintained and improved, if necessary. We would not reduce spending in this regard. This is very important. This is an important enough issue for all Canadians that we should all have a say, not just the Liberals.

Much of what we hear from the NDP and the Liberals today is very different from what we heard in the past in the Liberal minority report on child care. The current members of Elmwood—Transcona and Niagara Falls sat on the committee. Back then, the Liberals called their report, “Choices for Childcare: Now and the Future”.

At that time, the Conservatives and the Liberals both believed in parental choice. The Liberals said:

...there is high support for a number of locations for child care, including school facilities, child care places, licensed private homes, the child's home and the workplace.

The Liberals said:

A choice as to the location and setting of child care is extremely important in meeting the individual family's needs. The key factors are quality, parental involvement and convenience of location.

On flexibility, the Liberals said:

...services must be sensitive to this need, as it varies from community to community.

At that time, the Liberals saw the need to prioritize low and moderate income families and to offer employer incentives to stimulate workplace day care.

In fact, the Conservatives at that time recommended a 100% tax write-off for such facilities. The Liberals said that was good but that the write-off should exceed 100 percent.

At the same time, the Liberals said:

Good parenting requires time to spend with children. We must also provide for better recognition and services for the full-time parent.

The Liberals went on to say:

Quality child care must be designed as a support to good parenting, not a substitute for it. As such, it should provide for strong, positive parental involvement....

The Liberals at that time also commented on the delivery of day care by saying, “such a system undoubtedly would be a mix of profit and non-profit centres”.

● (1030)

Why? The Liberals said that it was because:

...the federal government must be mindful of varying provincial fiscal capacities; varying letters of existing service and programs to expand child care; geographic or culturally based differences....

Then the Liberals demanded that:

...any new federal spending arrangement must be properly accountable to Parliament; that is, should receive authorization through an act.

Those were their words, but not the actions we see today.

The Liberals said:

The system must be accountable, on an ongoing basis, to parents and taxpayers. As the...system expands, adequate measures will be required for ensuring that parents, taxpayers and employers receive value for money. As well, parents must have mechanisms to ensure quality and to call the system to account in cases where the child's best interests have not been served.

The Liberals call for regular reporting, a system of indicators for regular long term measurement and continual parental involvement.

The Liberals insisted services be available to all families.

### *Supply*

The Liberals recognized choice and said “...there must be first a system of quality choices from which families can choose” and that provides , “quality, accessible and affordable child care that does not vary unreasonably across Canada”.

Why have I so heavily quoted the Liberal minority report? I have done so to point out that the Liberals have lost their focus on this issue.

Often my own kids would make the right decisions, head down the right path and have a focused goal. Then, all of a sudden for no reason, when it came time to do the task, they would head in the opposite direction. As a parent I would turn to them and ask them what they were thinking and I would think a lot of other things. Seeing the Liberals' new direction I cannot help but ask the same thing.

The Liberals used to value parental choice, governmental accountability, quality care, parental involvement and the flexibility of delivery. Why not now?

The Conservative Party is very supportive of measures that will actually assist parents to provide a quality upbringing for their children. This is an important issue that must be handled properly. We cannot afford to throw good money into a bad plan.

A child care solution that only helps some children, some parents or some provinces is not much of a solution. Conservatives want a program that takes care of all children because nobody should be left behind.

The Conservative Party of Canada recognizes that parents are in the best position to determine how to care for and educate their children, not the federal Liberal government.

There is no one size fits all system of child care that could possibly be created by the Liberals to meet the needs of all Canadian families and children. This is a matter of provincial jurisdiction and they need the proper tools and resources to meet their unique needs.

Access to quality learning programs and child care are critical to the future of Canada's economy and social well-being.

The Conservative Party recognizes that these programs can be delivered through a number of ways, including through direct tax payments to parents through tax deductions and other policy matters. The current plan is a failure. Alberta is opting out. Quebec is expected to opt out and New Brunswick has requested autonomy for their system.

With the advancing systems in Ontario and Manitoba, it is obvious that the Liberal program does not meet the needs of Canadian parents or the provinces.

The Liberals have been promising Canadians a national child care program for over 10 years. However it is clear that once again they have put forward a plan that is not workable.

*Supply*

The Minister of Social Development has been attempting, without much success, to create a large government program at taxpayer expense. For the sake of our children and the Canadian taxpayer let us get a good plan before we rush ahead. He has failed so far, not because we, or the provinces, or average Canadians do not care about children, but because the plan is not sound.

Will the Liberal government now work with the rest of the House and the provinces to properly build a sound, sustainable child care strategy?

• (1035)

**Hon. Eleni Bakopanos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Social Development (Social Economy), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with much care to the speech of the hon. member and she said that her party will be helping the provinces.

I wonder if she could elaborate a bit more on how the Conservative Party will help the provinces while at the same time give tax cuts to low and middle income families.

**Mrs. Carol Skelton:** Mr. Speaker, we will allow the provinces to do their work in a proper and timely manner.

**Mr. Tony Martin (Sault Ste. Marie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, what problems do the Conservatives have with the principle of accountability and a program that asks the provinces to answer to the federal government for the expenditure of the money that will flow toward high quality licensed child care, but more important, the issue of choice which they have brought to the floor here today?

In my experience as a parent and as I have crossed the country, I believe parents have made choices. They have chosen to participate in the workforce and they know they can do this best with high quality licensed child care. Women have made choices. They want to participate in the workplace using their intelligence, gifts, training and education and to feel good about that. They know they can do that best when they have high quality licensed child care.

The economy and the workplace have made a choice. They want women with their gifts, their talents and their training in the workplace. I wonder why it is the Conservatives cannot accept that.

• (1040)

**Mrs. Carol Skelton:** Mr. Speaker, as a woman, a mother and a grandmother who has raised my children and who is watching my three children raise their children through various choices, I have to wonder where the hon. member is coming from. No one in my party has said that we have a problem with licensed day care. I want the member to listen when I say that I do not have a problem with it. However licensed day care is not available all across the country and therefore parents need choices. Women who are working need choices. Men who stay at home and look after the children need choices.

I have a wonderful daughter who is in the workforce but she cannot use licensed day care because she is a shift worker. Families need to have all kinds of services. I find it slightly offensive when you say that I do not understand what you are saying.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I would remind all members to address their comments through the Chair.

The hon. member for Laval.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I do not know whether our colleagues in the Conservative Party of Canada have drawn from the platform that a provincial party attempted to introduce in the last provincial election, but they should know that the party lost seats on that occasion.

I believe it is very important, if we want to ensure we have a consistent child care services policy, for that policy to be developed by the provinces and not by the federal government. The federal government must determine, with the provinces, the best way to guarantee a consistent policy. That means quality day care services, services that allow children to develop normally and give them every possible opportunity.

I am not sure whether my friend can understand. I too am a mother, a grandmother and a woman, and I demand quality day care services. It is not by taking money away from regular day care services and giving it directly to parents that we will end up with qualified day care services.

[*English*]

**Mrs. Carol Skelton:** Mr. Speaker, I am not sure what I can say to that but I think in my speech I mentioned that the funding would go to the provinces but that we also need support for families and the families need to make the choices on that. I understand the Quebec system and have looked at it extensively but not all provinces have a system like Quebec. We believe all Canadian parents should have choices.

**Hon. Ken Dryden (Minister of Social Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak to today's opposition motion. The motion calls upon the government to address the issue of child care by fulfilling its commitment to reduce taxes for low and modest income families in the upcoming budget and, so as to respect provincial jurisdiction, ensure that additional funds for child care are provided directly to parents.

Why is the government doing what it is on early learning and child care? About 10 years ago I went back to high school for a year to sit in class to try to figure out who was learning, who was not and why, who was a good teacher, who was not and why. It became very clear that all kinds of kids at that age had not learned well, had not done well and had the wrong understanding of themselves as students.

Students walk into a grade 10 math class feeling they do not know math, they cannot do math and they never will be able to do math. Then the class begins and the results are predictable.



*Supply*

That kind of wrong story begins before elementary school. From that experience of being in a school, it becomes much clearer why we hear often and understand well the phrase “the formative years”, those early years of a child's life. Why should those years matter so much in the course of one's learning over a lifetime? When people have many more years to grow older, many more years in school and many more years of experiences, why should those early years matter so much? It is in those early years that children start to take in the big messages and understandings of the world. Is this a good place? Is it a place where they want to be? Is it a place where they want to experience, enjoy adventure, curiosity and be rewarded for that?

All those big angles are set in those earlier years. It is through those angles and filters that we take in the experiences and learnings for the rest of our lives. That is why the parental role matters so much, especially during that time. Parents are there to guide. They take in the experiences of their children, except they are one step ahead. They know where the dangers lie and the implications of those dangers. If the curiosity leads to hurt or physical harm, then the likelihood is children will not want to have that next experience.

These are critical years and the role of the parent is critical. This explains why it matters so much that the parent be at the centre of the child's learning experience during that time of life. It also explains why the research is so clear and is becoming even more clear. Child development experts to economists, like Nobel laureate in economics, James Heckman, and Governor of the Bank of Canada, David Dodge, have been very clear in stating that an investment in early child development pays off far more than any other educational investment at any other time in a person's life.

We know the importance of this time of life, but what do we do about it, especially given these other facts? As has been mentioned, today in Canada 84% of parents with children are both in the workforce and 70% of women with children under the age of six are in the workforce. The great majority of kids under the age of six are in child care of some form. Yet only one in five is in regulated care, a number that has barely budged in the last decade.

● (1045)

Simply put, child care is how we live in the country. It is a reality. This is the fundamental question between the government and the party opposite. Do we reject this reality and try to change it, as the Conservative Party would, or do we work with the reality and try to make it better as the government would? How would we do it and would that work?

The Liberal position is quite clear. It was made clear in the last election campaign and set out again in the Speech from the Throne. The government has committed \$5 billion over five years to help build an early learning and child care system in every province and territory. While it is a large amount of money, it is a modest amount in terms of a system.

The question is, what can we do with that amount of money? How can we give the whole area of child care a boost? For the last 20 years, despite lots of good things happening and lots of good programs in existence, the area has been largely stagnant. However, at the same time, we are that much more aware of the importance of those early years. How can we do it better? How can we give it a

boost? How can we create something that is consistent with the rigour and importance of early childhood development?

What has not happened much in the last 10 to 15 years is with respect to wages, facilities and conditions. In every case there have been attempts made on a one-off basis to try to improve in those areas and they have largely failed because the analogy is an analogy that does not work; the analogy of the origins of child care in the custodial part and in the babysitting part. Therefore, wages do not increase.

How do we help raise the wages, increase the training and keep early childhood educators in the system? We change the analogy from babysitting to education, to early learning and development.

The only way we can do that is if we approach it with the kind of rigour and ambition that is consistent with the importance of this area. Without the commitment made in the last budget, it is very likely that we would remain stagnant for next five or ten years. Nothing much happened in the last 10 or 15 years and nothing much would. Whatever priority provinces and territories may have had for early learning and child care, with very few exceptions, they were not in the position to do much about it. Without the commitment made by the federal government, the Liberal Party, in the last election, not much would happen in any foreseeable way.

The Conservatives talk about tax cuts, about putting more money into the hands of parents and allowing them to make their child care choices. Except in their campaign platform, the specifics would see a child tax deduction of \$2,000 per child under the age of 16. What would that mean? Besides being, as the Caledon Institute puts it, “retrograde and regressive”, assisting wealthier families far more than those with lower modest incomes, what would it do for child care?

● (1050)

For a family earning \$30,000 a year, for one earning \$50,000 or \$70,000 a year, it would put less than \$1,000 into their hands. The average family pays about \$8,000 a year per child in child care, and that is for average child care, which is mediocre at best and unregulated. How likely is it that an extra \$1,000 in the hands of parent will mean putting their child into child care or into better child care? Will putting in money that way build up early learning and child care, push wages for child care providers higher so better trained people go into the field and stay in the field? Will it improve facilities?

### Supply

We did not create an education system by putting extra money into the hands of parents so they could get together, pool that money and create a school with well trained teachers. We did not create a health system by doing the same. We decided as a public that education and health care were so important that they should be available to everyone. The money went into the training of teachers and doctors, into building schools and hospitals. The quality went up, and as a country many decades later, we are immeasurably better off for it.

What would the Conservative plan do in terms of early learning and child care? It would do next to nothing. It would reward very modestly the stay-at-home parent or pay the cost of perhaps one day a week child care, but it would leave child care in the country too much where it is, fragmented, unregulated, uneven, largely custodial, with little for the child that would encourage real development, and would waste the time, the opportunity and the possibility of the early years.

As parents, we are all ambivalent about child care. We are ambivalent because we are parents, because we feel guilty about not spending more time with our kids. That is the way it was for us as parents, that is the way it is for us and is the way it will be for us. We will always feel ambivalent. We will always feel some sense of guilt in that way. The question is the other side of it as well, the non-ambivalent side for us as parents and that non-ambivalent side is the early learning side, the early childhood development side, and about that we are not ambivalent and we will never be ambivalent.

A recent study, as was cited by the Vanier Institute of the Family, has found that most moms and dads with pre-school children would prefer that one parent stay home and take primary responsibility for raising the children. Again, that is not surprising. As parents we all feel guilty about the time we are not spending with our kids. However, if we asked the same group of people or any group of people if they would like to lose weight, 90% would say yes. If we asked them if they would like ice cream once a week and chocolate twice a day, about the same percentage would say the same. The question, as in all of these matters, is not what we would like to do, but what we will do, and what we do.

For economic reasons, for reasons of lifestyle, for reasons of independence and lots more, in the great majority of cases both parents, even with young children, are in the workforce. We can feel guilty and we can wish it were not so, but it is so. All the time we are wishing, our kids are growing up without the rich, important learning experience that early learning and child care can offer. Our kids are paying the price for our wishful thinking. We need to get on with it, do it right and do it the best we can.

For parents, early learning and child care is not giving over one's child to the state. It is another option. As I have said before, that ongoing, ever-there set of adult eyes experiencing the world as their children do is absolutely crucial to the learning and developing experience of their children. But as parents, we also want a variety of experiences for our kids. Early learning and child care is not all or nothing. It can be for a day a week, two afternoons, whatever makes sense to the parent.

● (1055)

The Conservative position on tax cuts even if it helps disproportionately those who need the help the least is at least

honest and clear. Putting more money into parents' pockets is not a way to deliver on child care. If it walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, the differences between the Conservative Party and the government on early learning and child care could not be more clear. Members of the party opposite should speak to the philosophy and ideology they so proudly espouse. They should be bold, be honest and allow these differences to be clear and then let the people decide.

The Conservative plan, a tax cut it is; early learning and child care it is not.

**Mr. Barry Devolin (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as the minister knows, we have discussed this matter on a couple of occasions. I sit on the committee that has been investigating any sort of national day care program.

Last week the authors of the OECD study on child care made a presentation to our committee, two were via satellite video conference from Paris and several from Canada were in the room. There was discussion around the test scores of children who had been in what they called high quality regulated care versus low quality care. They never mentioned kids who stayed at home with their parents. When I asked how children who were raised at home by a stay at home parent fared in their testing, the response from one of the authors in Paris was that in fact children who had been raised at home did very well in testing.

I reject the very notion that some monolithic government operated day care system will inevitably lead to better results in terms of early learning than the alternative, which is to support parents who want to stay home with their children. Not only should it be financial support, but as we do with early year centres in Ontario, we should support those parents with tools and resources to help them teach their children.

I find that the minister has jumped from the fact that early years learning is needed to the notion that the inevitable result is some large government run monopoly for child care, which is the way Ontario seems to be going. I am wondering how the minister squares that with the fact that even the OECD says kids raised at home by their parents do very well in testing.

● (1100)

**Hon. Ken Dryden:** Mr. Speaker, I have no doubt that kids raised at home can do very well. I have no doubt about that; I have never had a doubt about that, and there is nothing in what I said today that casts any doubt about that.

*Supply*

What I do say is the fact of life is that in this country over 70% of parents with children under the age of six are both in the workplace. That is a fact. It is a reality and is the way in which we live. It is the way in which we have chosen to live. It is the way in which we very likely will be living in the future. The question is, what do we do about that? How do we best deal with that fact?

This is not about wishful thinking. This is not about imaging that next week, next year or five years from now only 20% of parents will be in the workplace. How could we imagine that we would ever get there? How would we ever conceive that would happen? It is an irresponsible assumption. There is no indication that is the direction in which we are going to be living. The fact is that all of these kids are growing up and what kind of development experiences are they having beyond the experiences that they are having at home?

**Mr. Tony Martin (Sault Ste. Marie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thought the minister made an excellent contribution to the discussion this morning, particularly his focus on the early learning and development nature of a new child care program, if we are to have the kind of quality that everybody who has looked at this anticipates we could have.

Having laid that out so very clearly, has he made the connection yet between quality in a national child care program and a not for profit delivered system? Has he given much thought to the possibility of some legislation? We in this place could have a full public debate about what it is that needs to be in a national child care program if it is going to be of the quality that we all expect. What does the minister want to do on that front, particularly following his discussion in British Columbia on Friday?

**Hon. Ken Dryden:** Mr. Speaker, the answer to both questions is yes. A lot of thinking has been done in terms of delivering child care in this country. A lot of thinking has been done about whether the best route is legislation.

As we have mentioned before, and has often been mischaracterized by the party opposite, we need to work with the provinces on this program. Because of the commitment we made, we are in a position to assist the provinces and territories in terms of the money. They will be delivering this system. We are agreeing on the principles of what kind of system we would like to see in every province and territory in Canada, but the provinces and territories will be delivering it.

At this particular moment there is one province in the country that is in a position to deliver only through the not for profit sector. Every other province in the country is in a position where they deliver in both ways at the moment.

• (1105)

**Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I was a little surprised to hear the minister complain that the Conservative policy in the last election was not sufficiently broad, given that his \$5 billion would simply expand funding of regulated day care spots from 7% to 10% of such spaces available.

I have considerable respect for the minister, but what really surprises me is the degree to which he has been overtaken by a radical ideology which believes that the state knows better how to raise children than parents do themselves.

Just listen to some of what he said. He said that 60% of children are in some form of child care. He has left out the children who are being raised by their parents as though they are not in child care. He said that only one-fifth are in regulated child care, which suggests that children who are raised at home somehow fall out of his vision of children who are raised in child care. This he referred to chillingly as custodial child care. He referred to children being raised at home as being in the custodial cart or the babysitting cart. He said that children being raised at home are being denied critical early learning opportunities. So-called custodial child care, i.e., children being raised by mom and dad at home constitutes what he said was a waste of time and opportunity. He said that they are being denied a rich learning experience.

I believe that millions of Canadian parents who make an economic sacrifice to spend time with their kids, who give up a second income to help raise their kids at home, are providing their children with a rich learning experience. They are providing their children with critical early learning opportunities.

Will the minister take the opportunity to apologize to the millions of stay at home parents, including the parents of many people here, who provide critical early learning opportunities and a rich learning experience? Will he apologize to those parents whose choices he has belittled?

**Hon. Ken Dryden:** Mr. Speaker, I only wish the member opposite had listened. Once again that was a significant mischaracterization. None of what he said is what I said.

I said repeatedly and very clearly in my speech that the experience of the parent and child is central. I clearly believe that. That was, that is and that will be. Child care is simply another option for parents to decide to take part in or not.

Parents, including stay at home parents, are looking for additional vivid, stimulating experiences for their kids. They are looking for an opportunity for their kids to be with other kids in other places and in different circumstances. They want their kids to have the opportunity to learn. These are not either/or issues no matter how the party opposite wants to characterize them. Early learning and child care is very simply another option for parents. Parents, as I said, before, now and always are at the centre of that learning and development experience.

**Mr. Maurice Vellacott:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I ask the House for unanimous consent for a five minute extension of the period for questions.

The minister is present and it is a great opportunity to pose questions of the guy who will be drafting the bill.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent for a five minute extension of the period to question the minister?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

*Supply*

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, thank you for recognizing me today in regard to the motion of the Conservative Party of Canada, which is of concern to all members of the Bloc Québécois. I would like to re-read the motion:

That the House call upon the government to address the issue of childcare by fulfilling its commitment to reduce taxes for low and modest income families in the upcoming budget, and, so as to respect provincial jurisdiction, ensure additional funds for childcare are provided directly to parents.

I think that this motion is very inconsistent. The members of the Conservative Party of Canada said that they would respect the areas of provincial jurisdiction, but they table a motion like the one this morning for debate. It is hard to see how one can mix things like reducing taxes for low income families and instituting a national child care system, as the government wants to do. This question is of concern to us.

I think that there is bad faith here. The Conservative Party of Canada says that it wants to gain ground in Quebec. I would argue that with this motion, with this failure to respect Quebec's areas of jurisdiction and the general consensus in Quebec regarding parental leave and daycare, they are not going about it in the right way.

I can tell you that this is a very contradictory gesture, which in no way serves Quebecers' interests or Quebec's jurisdiction, in particular. Intervening in this way, directly in families, is contrary to what we want now for Quebec.

The government wants to set standards and conditions for the national system, a Canada-wide system. Here too, we have a different opinion in Quebec, but we agree on the principle. We respect the desire of the other provinces for a Canada-wide system.

What Quebec wants is for there to be no conditions attached to this Canada-wide daycare system and none of the standards Quebec has put in place, namely: quality, universality, accessibility and development. We respect these four standards in Quebec and we have them already in place.

As a matter of fact, the Organization for Economic Development and Co-operation, the OECD, congratulated us on establishing a real daycare system that takes these features, these standards, into account. So why impose them on Quebec when we already have them? What we want is to have control over this daycare program, which Quebec established.

Following the Speech from the Throne, which was bristling with encroachments, the Bloc Québécois tabled some amendments. The amendment on respect for provincial jurisdictions was adopted. This morning's debate is of the highest concern to us in terms of this government's willingness to respect the jurisdictions and to resolve the fiscal imbalance.

I was therefore very surprised this morning to see the Conservative Party of Canada present this motion, which we will debate. Some of my colleagues are going to be questioned on this issue and will offer a number of arguments that might give the Conservative Party of Canada food for thought. As I was saying earlier, if the Conservative Party of Canada wants to make gains in Quebec it will also have to adjust to the consensus reached there.

I will provide some background to explain to the members of the Conservative Party of Canada where the desire for a child care system in Quebec came from. This service began following a consensus that had been reached in Quebec. In 1960, there was already talk of having a child care service in Quebec. In 1980, the Parti québécois minister, Pauline Marois, went ahead and contemplated replacing the existing community networks in Quebec. Neither standards nor basic framework existed. Furthermore, there was a lack of resources. They wanted to be much more consistent and to provide more help to families in need of child care.

● (1110)

As we are all well aware, there was an economic summit in 1996. All segments of society involved in the summit, whether unions or groups involved in the health or education, have contributed to the consensus on the implementation of a child care system in Quebec.

We refer often here in the House of Commons to that consensus in Quebec. We defend the interests of Quebec, not out of caprice or vanity, but because we respect that consensus. In fact, we are spokespersons for the progress made in Quebec toward the implementation of this child care system.

Political will was required, and we know the social development minister's own political desire to implement a national child care system has been challenged. As I have said, I can understand the needs outside Quebec, those in Canada, but he must not impose his conditions on us, nor the way this system will be put in place.

If the Conservative Party wants to lend an ear to what the public wants, it must focus on more than a single province. We know there is no unanimity on a Canada-wide child care system, and that is why certain Canadian provinces wishing to proceed on their own and implement different measures need to be respected.

This is what Quebec is calling for: flexibility, as well as respect for what it is doing. The Liberals, like the Conservatives, have a long way to go before they will understand the reality of Quebec. Quebec has 40% of the licensed child care spaces in Canada and, what is more, is the only place where there has been any significant growth in early childhood education and child care services.

The Conservative Party has just raised some questions of interest to us. They seem to be mixing up apples and oranges. This is not a debate on the quality of child-rearing by a mother, grandmother or a neighbour close to the children. The other day, we had a conference with some of the people involved in the OECD report, and asked the same question. We were told that there were few licensed child care spaces in Canada outside Quebec. I do not think that the way we were raised by our parents was being judged as good or less good, at least I did not take it that way. It was merely a statement with respect to the implementation of a system of licensed child care centres.

*Supply*

I think they are mixing things up. The Conservative Party once again wants to make us look bad when we talk about a child care system with supervision and qualified educators. We know that is an important element. Quebec developed its child care system with emphasis on personnel training. What existed prior to 1980 was well done, but Quebec wanted to adjust to changing times and to the obligation to look after the children.

The Conservative Party was saying it thought having a state-regulated day care system had no impact on the quality of the child's development. I would like to remind the Conservative Party that studies in Europe and the United States prove quite the opposite. In fact, child development improved. Moreover, every dollar invested bore fruit in the education and development of children. For example, in the case of delinquency and school dropouts, the more access a child has to resources, the more chance he has of being successful.

Besides, that is why we want a universal child care system, a system that does not discriminate based on social class. Children are entitled to the same service whether their parents' salaries are higher or lower.

• (1115)

That was the goal Quebec had in mind: to provide a child care system for all children from all social classes.

I think this is quite unusual, inconsistent and disrespectful of Quebec's wishes. The government has provided \$5 billion over five years. I can describe this as a step in the right direction, a step towards helping Quebec. Quebec's child care system costs \$1.4 billion; in 2006-2007, it will cost \$1.7 billion. We can certainly imagine that there will be pressure to put in more money.

There is also the issue of stable funding and a policy permitting a view of things in the longer term. We think the government is making errors on this subject. Is five years enough for a long-term policy, and is it enough to allow the partners—the provinces, according to the minister—to get involved? In Quebec there is no problem. We will upgrade what is already there with the goal of reaching a total of 200,000 places.

I invite the Conservative Party of Canada to read certain studies that have been done since the day care system was introduced in Quebec, and see how the parents have supported this system. Quebec has been a victim of the success of its day care system, because many people wanted to take advantage of it. We know that 70% of women are in the work force, and where there are couples, both spouses work. It is also necessary to meet expectations, and Quebec has been able to do this.

The Conservative Party of Canada is out in left field with its motion today. That is not to say that we are against a tax reduction for low- and modest-income families. We have shifted the debate, we have moved on to somewhere else. We simply want to address the establishment of a consistent day care system that meets the expectations of the people of Canada. For us in Quebec, we are talking about \$1.2 billion invested over five years.

In addition, to have a real family policy, there is parental leave, day care centres. The government could also take other actions to better meet the needs of the population and families. In 2005 we

must not put our heads in the sand and tell women, "Go back home, there is no child care system. Take care of your kids." I respect the women who want to do that, but on the other hand, to have a choice, there has to be a day care system in place. When there is no day care system, where is the choice? Under such conditions there is no choice.

As I was saying earlier, we shall have to follow the debate. We are a little disappointed at how slow the Minister of Social Development is in making a decision on funding. When is he finally going to give us his answer on the date when the funds will be available?

He was speaking of principles just now. This is a subject on which we cannot be in agreement. He said that there will be no conditions for Quebec, although not in so many words. We have asked about 20 questions in the House since we came back, since our election. We have asked the minister to explain his thinking. His thinking is rather shaky so far as due respect for the jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces is concerned. This is something that is not clear to us. He often praises the work we have done in Quebec on day care centres, referring to a 100-page OECD study that comments on the administration that has been done.

• (1120)

Furthermore, in its report, the OECD indicates that the best way to establish a child care network is to make it a provincial responsibility, because local governments are much closer to the needs and the reality of individuals.

The Minister of Social Development missed a meeting on February 11 in Vancouver, where he was to indicate his financial commitment. As a result, he has put this off until a later date, because he was not prepared to reveal how he will invest. Furthermore, if we remember Ottawa's stance on parental leave, we know quite well that it takes pushing and shoving to get clear answers from this government.

In short, why have a child care system. In Quebec, as we know, child care costs \$7 a day. I understand that caring for an infant elsewhere in Canada can cost approximately \$558 per month. This is a great deal of money for a family where both parents work. As the minister mentioned earlier—I agreed with him—it would be attractive even to women who want to stay home or who want to have the choice to stay home. They have other obligations too, so it is important to have accessible, safe child care for their children, that provides a good education so their children can develop in a secure environment. That way, parents can leave feeling reassured, when they do not have a sister, cousin or friend able to come care for their child.

Perhaps that was the way things were when we were in that situation. However, young parents today need two salaries. We are hearing that it does not take much to get by on one income and to sacrifice the other to provide a better education. Some of the comments made during this debate are questionable. However, when the need is there and the service is not, one of the parents has to think about their social commitment.

### Supply

The consensus in Quebec is clear. It exists. We see that a coalition has been created on parental leave. We are receiving more and more e-mails showing the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development the way and asking her to respect Quebec's consensus on parental leave and secure it with the money that was already negotiated and accepted in 1997 by the government at the time, which was a Liberal government.

There are messages. In fact, this morning, I have two messages to deliver; one is for the Conservative Party, on its consistency with regard to respect for Quebec's areas of jurisdiction and its needs and wishes. Further, I have a second message for the Minister of Social Development. We will not object to the creation of a national day care system, as long as it is done with respect for provincial jurisdictions and carries no conditions.

Since Quebec is held up as a leader, it is not at all apparent how it could be put in its place with conditions, standards, and accounting. In Quebec, there are child care centres, and there is also a complete family policy. If we are already investing \$1.4 billion in the child care system, that is a lot. Will there be redistribution of the money once the public's expectations are met? There is a goal of 200,000 places. I am certain we will reach it. When it is reached, money will be invested matters of family policy.

In my opinion, Quebec is capable of managing its needs and listening to what the public wants. It is within this context and in this sense that we ask the federal government to establish this child care system.

Because we have reached the time for questions and comments, I await the minister's questions. I am sure he will have some questions for me.

• (1125)

[English]

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have three questions which the member could assist me with. I know this member well and I know that she has taken an active interest in this file.

First of all, the member may recall that there was a major round table by HRDC on the early years of life. Many experts were there and all of those experts talked about the importance of the first year of life. I think that was encapsulated by a statement by Dr. Fraser Mustard, who said that the first year of a human life in terms of neural development was dynamite. I wonder if the member could comment on what special arrangements are made with regard to newborns, because I believe that the Quebec system initially came in only for ages three or maybe four to six.

Second, the minister and I think others have said that because all these systems have been classified somewhat as glorified babysitting, there is going to be a necessity to either upgrade the skills of existing people or hire better qualified people to provide the services. I want to know what Quebec's experience was in terms of the qualifications of the people in the existing system and what was done there.

The last issue is simply this. What is done for families who are not near child care centres, those in remote areas or who have long or

unreasonable distances to travel to get to facilities that are provided in Quebec?

• (1130)

[Translation]

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon:** Mr. Speaker, I will try to respond, but the three questions require more elaborate responses than my time allows.

The important part is training the educators that work in child care centres. That is why it is very important to have qualified staff for each age category using the services at these centres. This was an important objective for Quebec and that is why we wanted the child care centres to be better structured. We also wanted to offer better salaries in order to get qualified staff and ensure better support in terms of training to meet the children's needs.

Home-based childcare is also available in Quebec in cases where child care centres are not accessible because the family lives too far away.

However, the 200,000 spots that were created did not just appear out of thin air. They took time to develop, with age categories and availability of spots. When parental leave is implemented for young couples, we know full well that once they return to work they want access to child care. They are currently on waiting lists.

That is why a child care system has to be developed in terms of quantity, but also accessibility. When we think of QUAD, or the four principles, Quebec wanted to respond by establishing a better quality service that was more suited to the needs of the children's age categories. We also know that the minister attended this information session. In Quebec, the child care centre policy had to be explained.

The OECD submitted a 100-page report on this issue. Quebec was cited as an example and influenced their perception of a true child care program. They say it is one of the best in the world. The 100 pages certainly contain convincing arguments for the need to have this type of service and point to the excellence of services in Quebec.

• (1135)

[English]

**Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the resolution that is before the House deals with choice. The Conservative Party believes that parents should have a choice among public day care, private day care and care from parents, grandparents or friends. They should have that choice.

The Bloc Québécois and the Liberal Party are actually quite similar in their philosophies. They believe that the state should decide where preschool children should go and they believe children should go to a day care centre.

I would recommend to the Liberal Party and the members of the Bloc Québécois a very interesting article put forward by Peter Shawn Taylor in the *National Post* quite recently, called "Listen to the parents". It talks specifically about the Quebec philosophy.

*Supply*

Really, Quebecers only have one choice: they have to enrol their kids in day care. That is their only choice. They do not have any other choice. If they read this resolution being put forward by the Conservative Party of Canada, they will see that we believe in all kinds of choice. My question for the member from the Bloc is, why will she not support real choice in the presentation of day care?

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon:** Mr. Speaker, there is a real choice precisely because the Government of Quebec set up a day care system. People can opt for home-based child care or day care centres. Ultimately, it is since the start of a real day care system in Quebec that people have had choices.

I would like to remind the member of the Conservative Party of Canada who questioned me that there are parents who sit on the boards and have their say in the early childhood centre systems. There is a consensus that has emerged in Quebec. All the people involved in the educational system, the health system, the unions and the parents' committees agreed to participate in the development and establishment of a quality day care system that meets needs. This had such an impact on Quebec society that there were too many applications compared with the amount of money available. If we had not given Quebec parents choices, they would not have the choice that currently exists.

So the rest of Canada wants to set up a national day care system. I have seen statistics for some provinces taken from surveys of women in the workforce regarding the use of regulated day care services. We know that there is a mounting need. We cannot put our heads in the sand and deny that this need exists. This is a choice made by government. People outside Canada, all around the world, point to Quebec. Quebec influences other countries in regard to the approach to be taken and how to do things.

If the needs of the young families of today are going to be met, we cannot deprive them of this choice. On the contrary, they must be provided with this choice of day care services and other related things. For example, if a parent decides to stay home for a certain amount of time, parental leave—which is one of the measures proposed by Quebec—will enable this parent to care for their baby for a longer period of time. That is very understandable.

Then, however, the parent returns to the workforce. If the people of Canada and Quebec are not provided with a choice at this point, the end result will be no child care at all, or child care that does not adequately meet the public's needs.

[*English*]

**Mr. Tony Martin (Sault Ste. Marie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak today on this really important subject at this moment in our history, when we can, if we can all work together, put in place another national program of which we can all be proud and that will serve us as we build this great nation.

It is good to be here this morning and to recognize that the minister has taken time out of his busy schedule to listen to what we in opposition have to say about this bill. I know from discussions I have had with the minister that he is thoughtfully listening and trying to incorporate as best he can that which will be in the best interests of our children, our families and a good child care system across the country.

The NDP and I welcome this debate on child care. It is a remarkable debate and is happening not only in this House but across the country from coast to coast to coast. It is an important debate that is taking place in communities, with families, within the child care constituency, with academics and in the media.

The NDP does not agree with the ideas put forth in this motion, because, frankly, a high quality child care and early learning system is about building a nation, not tearing it apart. It is about helping child development in those critical early years of learning so that our children grow up with the best possible start in life. A quality child care and early learning system not only grows our children, it grows healthy communities and a healthy economy.

To talk about a national child care system is to talk about what our country's social priorities will be. It is to talk about nation building, which is what medicare and public education have been. Done well, as Margaret McCain and Roy Romanow have written, it will address child and family poverty and we will enhance school performance and workforce productivity.

Our party cannot stand for vouchers or for child care tax deductions because studies have repeatedly shown that they make child poverty worse and widen the already scandalous gap between the haves and have nots in our country. Vouchers and child care tax deductions do not produce a child development system.

It is a false notion, one perpetrated by a Conservative Party stuck in another century and another generation, that this is a debate between stay at home parents and those who work. Nothing is further from the truth.

Parents are and should and will be the primary caregivers of their children. A quality child care and early learning system is not the nanny state. It is not a judgment on or a condemnation of our mothers, grandmothers, fathers or grandfathers. I can hear many of those mothers, grandmothers, fathers and grandfathers from back at another time now shouting, "Thank God for any help parents might receive to do the best possible job raising their children and grandchildren."

They would welcome the many potential tools and assets in a quality system: tools such as respite programs that help parents when they are sick, have a medical appointment or a job interview, and seamless programs that help parents deal with juggling work and family duties throughout the day, particularly before and after school. There are opportunities that come with the child for programs or parenting courses or to join child care centre boards as volunteers and have a direct say in the education and development of their children.

*Supply*

No, this debate is not about the nanny state or about any attack on stay at home parents. It is about deciding whether we will build a nation and belong to the 21st century. with kids who grow up because of these best starts to get some post-secondary education, to get and keep a job and to be productive citizens in our social economy.

We have a rare opportunity to end the years and years of broken promises from both Conservatives and Liberals. We have the opportunity to say a resounding no here this morning to a Conservative vision of yesteryear and from another generation.

● (1140)

We as New Democrats have been very clear in where we stand on this subject. We have been working very hard, my staff and I, and my colleagues in caucus. Other New Democrats across the country have meeting, phoning and putting together what we think is a very doable, simple, yet successful, approach to how we put in place this national child care program.

I have had this discussion on at least three different occasions with the minister. I think he understands and he is trying, given the challenge that he has with provinces that have different ideas and notions about what this should be about, to find a way to make this truly a national child care program that respects what we need to do on behalf of our children and families.

We believe that any national child care program needs to have a number of characteristics, a number of supports in order to make it successful. We believe that it needs to be enshrined in legislation. We do not start off on a trip not knowing where we are going, not having the requisite resources available to ensure that we get from here to there, and ensuring that we do not get off on the wrong road and end up some place where we did not want to be in the first place because factors take over, as we go down that road.

We believe that the legislation should be enabling. It should be a piece of legislation that empowers the provinces to deliver this wonderful national child care program that we are all anticipating could be put in place. A national child care act should guarantee that the principles that those who have looked at child care be honoured, respected and supported. These are principles such as: quality, universality, accessibility, educational development and inclusive of children with disabilities who also have a role to play and want to participate. These families have hope for those wonderful children who should be looked upon not so much for their disability but for their ability. A child care program should have the resources, the interest, and the developmental approach that would take into account the challenges and opportunities that exist there.

We believe that a piece of legislation would look at two way accountability. A child care system would be sustainable. That is where federal accountability comes in. The federal government must commit beyond the five year, \$5 billion it has announced.

Quebec's plan, as we heard from the member from Quebec previously, touted as gold standard costs \$1.3 billion a year. The federal government only wants to give \$1 billion a year to all 13 provinces and territories over the next five years.

I recognize that the \$5 billion is a start and will buy some of the infrastructure that we need to get this national program on the way.

However, the government needs to be thinking and sharing with us and the provinces about where we go after the five years and how much money it is talking about.

We have heard the Child Care Advocacy Association, the Canadian Labour Congress and others say that we need to be moving within 15 years, although Stephen Lewis at the conference that you and I were at in Winnipeg, Mr. Minister suggested that—

● (1145)

**The Deputy Speaker:** I wish to remind the hon. member to address his comments through the Chair and not personally to the minister or any other member in the House.

**Mr. Tony Martin:** I appreciate that, Mr. Speaker.

In conversations I have had with the minister and from the research and work that has been done to determine how much it would cost to have a full scale quality national child care program, we have to be moving within 15 years. Stephen Lewis in Winnipeg said that over 10 years we should spend 1% of GDP. We need a commitment from the federal government for the sustainability of this program.

The NDP election platform, for example, in 2004 committed \$1 billion in the first year, \$1.25 billion in the second year, \$1.4 billion in the third year and \$1.6 billion in the fourth year, with significant increases in the fifth year. This was part of our plank to spend almost \$5 billion by the end of a fifth year. In other words, the Liberal promises amount to \$4 billion by the end of the fourth year while the NDP promises amount to \$5.25 billion by the end of the fourth year. Even that is not enough, but it is a good start.

We also feel that there needs to be some vehicle in the legislation to hold the provinces accountable in order to ensure that in fact the money they get for child care is spent on child care and not simply used to replace money that they are spending which could mean no new spaces and no new programs.

The provinces and territories must spend this new money on child care and not, as in the past, claw it back or spend it in other areas. This requires the creation of an independent child care council, like the Romanow health council, to monitor, gather data and report to Canada's citizens.

Everyone in the House has heard me on a number of occasions ask the minister questions or raise in comments or speeches that this program, and if everyone looks at what has happened in Quebec they will understand, needs to be rooted in the not for profit system. No new money should go to the for profit system to develop new spaces.



*Supply*

We are not saying that we should shut down the already existing for profit system that is out there. These folks are working very hard under sometimes very trying circumstances with very little resources to provide a quality of child care that in each province differs. It has given us in fact the patchwork that is spoken of so often by the Child Care Advocacy Association. We are not saying that we need to get into a fight with those folks or threaten what they have been doing for a number years. As a matter of fact, we probably need to be sitting down and talking with that sector about how it can raise its quality.

We are concerned about the arrival or emergence in Canada of the big box multinational child care reality that we see in so many other parts of the world and to some small degree already exists in Canada. We run up a red flag where that is concerned because that will not get us the quality we want.

As a matter of fact, in jurisdictions where for profit has been allowed to run freely, we have seen in a short period of time the disappearance of the smaller for profit and not for profit sectors almost altogether. We want to ensure, coming out of the gate with this, that we are committed to a not for profit system that will give us the quality the research tells us is connected.

Distinguishing ourselves from the Liberals and certainly the Conservatives, New Democrats stand for public funding in a new child care plan going only to the not for profit sector. We support grandfathering the existing for profit sector to ensure it achieves quality standards in the interim period.

As a matter of fact, the member for Quebec spoke before me and we know that when Quebec began its child care program, which is now the envy of the rest of the country, it put a moratorium on any new for profit development so that the not for profit system could get its legs under it and develop in the way it knew it could given the money, support and the room that was necessary.

• (1150)

Our fight is with big box child care, for example, U.S. and Australian corporations that gobbled up neighbourhood, municipal and commercial operators, resulting in lower quality and fewer real choices for parents and families, including in remote, rural or northern communities. Eddy Groves, for example, a Canadian who owns the ABC Learning Centres in Australia, owns 20% or some 900 centres in that country. He has told Canadian media that our new national plan would be an excellent opportunity for him.

The Conservatives say the Alberta position will allow for flexibility and choice. Edmonton-Strathcona MLA Dr. Raj Pannu said yesterday that this is Tory-speak for protecting for profit day care and allowing more government subsidies to flow to private companies operating child care facilities. The previous Alberta NDP leader said:

The Tory position is about petty turf politics with Ottawa at the expense of children and families. But Albertans want cooperation between all levels of government on important programs like child care, not political posturing

We do not demonize the small for profit operators, many not making a profit, who would profit in not for profit. There was a case in Alberta at a for profit centre recently of a six month old baby with severe asthma problems locked and left at the end of a working day.

It took the mom three hours to get to her baby. Yes, this is one incident, but it is part of a series of incidents. If we google child care on any given day, we will see the stories that are being written about what is happening out there primarily in the for profit sector across the world.

CUPE got a legal opinion of Canada's exposure to big box child care. It is clear that we have to be careful where we go in terms of NAFTA and what that could trigger in terms of what we might be able to do to control the quality and the kind of national child care program that we want.

I want to share with the House, in response to the resolution before the House here today, some of the challenges coming at us from primarily the Conservative Party and its supporters. I have travelled the country over the last six to seven months, and I have heard from people. I have been in Halifax, Moncton, Montreal, Toronto, Sault Ste. Marie, Winnipeg, Regina, Vancouver, Burnaby and New Westminster. There is a growing anticipation and expectation across the country that finally, after 20 or 30 years of really hard work, of almost getting there a couple of times, that we will this time get a national child care program.

The passion, the commitment and the expectation is tangible as we meet with these people and as they come to tell us about what they are doing, what they would like to do, and what the expectation is out there among the families and neighbours as they talk about child care. There is a sense of hope now, after years of promise by the Mulroney government in the eighties and the Liberal government in the nineties, that we will finally get a national child care program.

For example, I heard from Margie in Halifax, an administrator and director of a child care program who actually went out on strike with her workers in order to get better pay because she knew that when better pay is given to the workers in a child care facility, they give better quality service and they stay longer in the system.

I remember Sharon in Nova Scotia coming all the way from Cape Breton to talk to me about the need to be inclusive of children with disabilities. I remember a woman from the farm community in Saskatchewan coming to the meeting I had to tell me not to forget the farm communities and the farm families because they needed child care as much as anybody else.

Those stories go on across this country. They need to be heard, they need to be told, and they need to be factored in to the government's decision making process where child care is concerned.

• (1155)

We must act and act soon. The answers lie not in vouchers or a child care tax deduction, but in a sustainable quality child care system enshrined in legislation that sees both levels of government accountable and public money spent on not for profit child care.

### Supply

It is a choice time for our country to go with the best research we have, the best studies, to say yes to our children for today and tomorrow. Every one of us here can be architects of a truly national policy, a truly national system. We can build a society that makes the welfare of its younger members its top priority, and create a society that is welcoming of children and supportive of their growth and development.

[Translation]

**Mr. Marcel Gagnon (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, this morning the Conservative Party has come up with a motion on an extremely interesting topic. I find it interesting both as a grandfather and as someone who had a hand in the creation of Quebec's child care system. When discussions on that system began, I was sitting in the National Assembly. I chaired meetings and debates in parliamentary committees where people came to share their ideas on the requirements for that system. I remember very clearly hearing from them that what was needed—and this is the reason I am absolutely opposed to the Conservative motion—was for all children in day care, in early childhood education, to be given a chance.

They mention giving the funds to parents, but families can run into situations where they run short of money. A job is lost, or some other situation comes up where there are no other resources available. What happens to the money that was supposed to pay for their child to be in proper child care? It goes for something else. This creates an imbalance between the haves and the have-nots. That is more or less what our interpretation was.

Now for my question. There was talk of a system adaptable to requirements. A person could work in a factory or for Radio-Canada in Montreal and take their child to workplace day care. Then there were the drop-in child care facilities, which I had to speak up for in those days, serving farm families and others living far from major centres.

So this is my question for the hon. NDP member. Since it is true that we have a good system going in Quebec, and there is no need to keep reinventing the wheel—Quebec's system has built-in adaptability—and since it is a given that we do have those services, would he acknowledge that the minister should hand over to Quebec the funds it needs to be able to continue to administer its system without necessarily including the obligation to submit to national standards? It is a matter of providing the funds to Quebec without imposing those national standards. That is what Quebec wants. Is he in agreement with that?

• (1200)

[English]

**Mr. Tony Martin:** Mr. Speaker, we in the New Democratic Party certainly respect the contribution Quebec has made in building a child care system that is the envy of the rest of the country. That needs to be reflected in any agreement that is made. We have to find a way to help Quebec grow its system even more, make it better, so that the rest of the country has something to look at and emulate in many ways, and so that the work of Quebec is helpful to the rest of Canada.

I have met with child care providers in Montreal on a couple of occasions. Some people from the Quebec child care community have

visited me in Ottawa. We need to have further discussions about whether we can use the experience in Quebec to frame a national program with standards, requirements and accountability mechanisms.

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, a number of years ago I attended a meeting and had the opportunity to sit beside Barbara Hall, who is a former mayor of the city of Toronto. We were talking about child care issues. It was about seven or eight years ago.

I remember saying to her that it bothered me that the wages of child care workers were so low, that a person could make more by working at McDonald's. She said that I was absolutely right but that I had to understand it was part of the employment initiatives for women. Is child care for the benefit of children or for the benefit of women to get jobs? The reality is that there are competing interests.

Today we are talking about the care of children. The minister is doing his very best to collaborate with the provinces to find out how we strike that appropriate balance.

If we have the problem, as the minister laid it out in his speech, that it is glorified babysitting and the workers are not properly trained, how long is it going to take to get the system up to a quality of care which would also deal with the problem of ensuring there was secure consistent attachment with an engaged committed adult? That is in fact the recipe for a good learning environment for a child, whether it is the child's parent or some other person, as long as there is consistent care.

• (1205)

**Mr. Tony Martin:** Mr. Speaker, the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada has put out a paper called, "From Patchwork to Framework", which speaks to the timelines. It is looking at 15 years to actually have a system in place that we can feel comfortable is going to do the job.

The member raised an interesting question that has been raised before. Is this agenda about women or is it about children? It is an agenda that can incorporate everybody. What is good for women is good for children. What is good for children is good for women. What is good for women and children is good for the economy and the community.

I visited Toronto on a couple of occasions and there are three types of child care being offered. There is the municipally delivered child care, the not for profit and the for profit systems.

The McDonald's type wages are being paid very obviously in the for profit sector. That is why we are encouraging the minister to move to a not for profit delivery system.

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Nepean—Carleton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am somewhat surprised that the hon. member, before getting into the substance of his remarks, did not address the very offensive remarks made by the minister earlier today when he compared the decision of parents to keep one parent in the home to the luxury of having ice cream.

*Supply*

**Hon. Eleni Bakopanos:** Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I believe we are trying to keep the debate at a certain level in the House. Out of respect for the House, I think alluding to offensive is not the type of language that is acceptable in the House. I would ask the hon. member to be very careful in his choice of words.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I appreciate the intervention, however, we are going to allow a certain flexibility. Of course all members should be careful in their choice of words, but I do not think it is a point of order.

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre:** Mr. Speaker, the very offensive remarks were made by the minister when he compared the decision of parents to keep one parent in the home with the children to the luxury of having ice cream.

The Vanier Institute said that 90% of parents would make that choice if they could; they believe it to be the ideal choice. In fact it is a larger number of women who prefer this choice than men. I think it is deeply offensive, and I wonder if the hon. member agrees, that the minister would compare that choice, which by the way 47% of parents make, to the luxury of having ice cream or losing a few centimetres off of one's waistline.

Not only were his remarks offensive, they were actually untrue. It is not a luxury that cannot be afforded and cannot occur. Forty per cent of parents do it and the other 53% who might like to do it cannot because the government structures a tax system that makes it unaffordable to do so.

Instead of trying to enable parents to make the choice they want to make, the government is putting in a new program that forces them into the choice that they do not want to make. Would the hon. member stand in the House and address the ill-founded logic and the offensive nature of the minister's remarks?

**Mr. Tony Martin:** Mr. Speaker, I think the minister was simply making an analogy which in the context of his speech was fine.

The member made a point that 90% of women choose to stay at home with their children. The reality is that 70% of women choose to work. It has nothing to do with the tax system. It has everything to do with their wanting to use their gifts, their training and intelligence to participate more fully in their communities, in the social economy or the market economy. They want to be involved and play a part. Women have a role to play. Those who have studied economics understand that women with their intelligence, talent and gifts need to play a part if we are going to compete in the global economy.

**Mr. Gary Goodyear (Cambridge, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I too would like to address the motion put forward by the Conservative Party. I am splitting my time with the member for Edmonton—Spruce Grove.

I am completely in support and in favour of developing strategies that put children and families at an advantage. Although this is primarily a provincial issue, the federal government has a role to play in developing those strategies and in setting standards, both along the lines of minimum standards, whether it is for profit or not for profit, or whether it is just providing funding that the provinces can count on, and not simply to get us through the next election and then pull the rug out from under that funding.

Members of the NDP seem to be mixing some of the philosophies and appear to be quite confused. On the one hand, they are not supportive of for profit day care, but on the other hand, they are supportive of raising the wages. Raising wages is an extremely good idea but that is actually personal profit. I am confused about that.

The NDP also seems to feel that the only reason women are out working is because of a choice to provide intelligence and benefits to the community. While that is absolutely correct, I think it is very simplistic that this is a choice and only a choice. The truth is that Canadians cannot afford to live on a single income any more. I would beg the NDP to do a little more research and to completely understand that for women it is not just a choice, it is that there are no other options.

One other thing I would like to make clear on this argument is that the Conservative Party is not saying no to day care. What we are saying is that day care should not be the only option. This is not about dictating. It is not about winning elections or trying to put forth a promise that who knows how many times this has been promised. This is about children and about families.

I am a parent of two children. I have had the opportunity and the pleasure to have my children schooled in private schools. I have had them in day care. I have had the good fortune of having a sister-in-law care for my children. My mother and my spouse were fortunate enough to stay at home for many years. That is the choice. What we see with Canadians families is that they do not have that kind of choice. I was very blessed to be able to do that for my family.

What we have here is a government that is putting forth a program that does not offer all of those choices. It is institutional day care or it is nothing. The hon. minister has proposed \$5 billion, which is the 10th or 11th time this promise has been made. I completely disagree with my colleagues in the NDP. This is not after 20 years of hard work. This is after a decade of broken promises.

I am concerned that the hon. member, in an attempt to do the right thing, has put the cart before the horse. I do not see a plan or a strategy. I see a proposal and I hear discussion and talk. I have no faith this will ever go anywhere. I am concerned that the government is in over its head on this issue and is moving forward without considering the true needs of all Canadians or the fallback of another program that will not score well with Canadians. No matter how many times we tell Canadians that this is a universal program for all children, the fact is that is completely not true and it is very misleading.

My party and I do not use the term "universal" because that is absolutely not what this program is all about. For me this appears to be more about spending money and keeping promises, at least until the next election, hence the five year limit on this funding. It is more about keeping a promise than helping Canadians and I am very concerned about that.

● (1210)

The fact is that this program from the government will not help all children. A very limited number of children and families will be helped. The only universality in this program is that all parents and non-parents will pay for it.

### Supply

What about the millions of children who fall outside the program's parameters? An estimated 250,000 children might benefit from this so-called universal institutionalized day care. What about the other approximately four million children who will not get any benefit? This is actually the fifth out of six options presented by the Vanier Institute. It is actually the second-last.

The program, as I mentioned earlier, fails to promise stable funding to the provinces. Provinces will get into an adversarial kind of positioning as a result of this limited funding. They will feel separated and divided from their federal counterparts. This kind of option promotes divisiveness. It promotes this theory of having to fight with the federal government, which again leads to this business that this is not about the people for the people of the people. This is about the Liberals trying to fulfill a promise, again without thinking about the collateral issues behind this extremely expensive and very limited program in terms of benefits.

We have had far too many opportunities to see what happens when the Liberal government gets a hold of another program that has to do with billions of dollars. We certainly do not want, nor can we afford, another boondoggle that will race out of control in terms of funding and ultimately end up somewhere in the neighbour of 20¢ efficiency on a \$1.

The Conservative Party has better ideas. Just because it is the Conservative Party that has come up with these creative solutions, which are far more long term and far more universal, is no reason in and unto itself to not listen to them. I would ask the House and the minister to consider the benefits of all parents of children maintaining control and choice on the rearing of their most valuable possession.

The Liberals' program excludes grandparents. It excludes stay at home moms and dads. It excludes extended families for cultural or choice reasons. It excludes rural families.

Although I did hear the hon. member from the NDP say that we should listen to our farmers, I have travelled the country. Does the member actually think there will be a day care at the end of every lane? The people in those farming communities cannot drive 40, 60, 70 kilometres to put their children into day care. It is ridiculous to assume that this program will benefit those rural families.

What about the children in communities who have special needs?

What about the waiting times to get into this limited program? We all know about waiting times when the Liberals manage a program.

I would encourage the House to listen to the ideas that are presented. We need to give tax breaks to parents. If the hon. member in the NDP wants better pay, then we should give the people a tax break. That is better pay.

Why not add a child tax credit to the existing child tax exemption which favours the more wealthy Canadians? A child tax credit puts money back into the pockets of all parents.

Why not eliminate the penalties in the income tax system that seem to punish single income families over the double income or multiple income families?

●(1215)

Those are Conservative ideas but they represent true fairness and true equal rights. They support choice, they support family and they will work well beyond five years. This gives a no strings attached approach to parents across Canada in every community and from every ethnic and cultural background. This is how parents can then use this money to simply choose whether they will put their child in the day care program or pay their mother, for example, to rear their children.

I will suggest that this is a reward, not punishment. This is choice, not dictation. This is a costed and predictable way for Canadians. It has no opportunity to become a boondoggle.

●(1220)

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Nepean—Carleton, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I want to discuss with the hon. member the very offensive remarks that were made by the minister earlier today when he compared the sacrifice of a parent who decides to stay at home with his or her children to the luxury of tasting ice cream.

For the 47% of parents who do make that choice and for the 90% of parents who wish they could make that choice, according to the Vanier Institute study, it is not a luxury like ice cream. It is an important decision that they are making to pass on to the next generation, a life, the care, the love of a family. It is not merely the frivolity of this luxury of ice cream.

I want the hon. member to comment on the fact that the Liberal program is not universal. It excludes 85% to 90% of children: those who have a parent who stays home, those who are cared for by a family member, those who are in community based care, or at synagogues, mosques and churches that offer care, and those who are in private care facilities. All of those children are excluded under this Liberal babysitting bureaucracy.

I wonder if the hon. member would comment on the overall mentality that permeates the entire Liberal proposal and is most exemplified by the minister's ice cream remarks earlier today. I wonder if the hon. member would comment on those offensive remarks.

**Mr. Gary Goodyear:** Madam Speaker, I too was appalled by the minister's comments. As a parent and having had children who have scraped their knees and needed a hug, they did not need a hug from a bureaucrat. They needed a hug from a parent.

The comments, although appalling and extremely offensive, were not surprising. They smack of the government's inability to be sensitive to the value of the family unit. The minister himself lacks the sensitivity to understand the importance, if given a choice, to have family, either immediate or extended, rear, discipline, teach and foster our children, our future leaders.

I was not surprised by the comments and I am not surprised that the government is moving forward with a plan that really has no base in logic or reason.

*Supply*

What we need to do is put money back into the pockets of parents and let them make a choice. If day care is what they choose, then that is great, and let us make that day care program the best it can be. However if a parent chooses to use a relative to babysit or if a parent chooses to work part time and stay home with the children, as I believe many parents would choose if they had the option, we need to support those kinds of decisions and not discriminate by encumbering tax laws and holding Canadians down where they have no choice but to go to work every day and put their children into some institution and just assume and hope that 20 years from now it will all be okay.

That kind of insensitivity and lack of lateral thinking on the part of the government is exactly presented in the comments that we have heard lately by the minister.

• (1225)

**Hon. Eleni Bakopanos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Social Development (Social Economy), Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I have been listening to most of the speeches today. I want to get back to the first question I asked this morning. I have heard a lot about choices, and I think there is no one, neither the minister nor anyone on this side of the House or in the other two political parties, who is not in favour of choices. I had choices in where I wanted to place my children.

I have heard nothing on the other side in terms of how they are going to work with the provinces, not in any way imposing, but in the way of ensuring that there is quality child care across Canada. I have heard nothing from the other side in terms of how that relationship will work. How will they at the same time offer tax cuts to low and middle income families? We have already provided those. I am sure the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance will put that on the table later on this afternoon.

In terms of the relationship and the collaboration that they would like to have with the provinces in assuring—

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre:** We trust parents.

**Hon. Eleni Bakopanos:** The hon. member is very abusive in this House on a continuous basis. He had his say.

My point is how will they ensure that the necessary training, which is not under federal jurisdiction, will be provided by the provinces? How will they ensure that children are in regulated day care? How will they bring in other measures?

The only thing I have heard today is about choices. No one on this side of the House or in the other political parties is against choices, despite the verbal diarrhea on the other side.

**Mr. Gary Goodyear:** Madam Speaker, I am not even sure the comments warrant an answer. This is clearly coming from a government that professes choice, but comes up with a program that has no choice.

Clearly, there are standards within the child care system. These are early childhood educated workers who come out of their community programs highly skilled already, with standards that are set by the provinces, and the member should very well know that. We are clearly suggesting that the federal government give money back to these lower income persons and families and let them choose which

program they go into. If the program is not up to snuff, they move the children somewhere else.

I assure the member that the programs will be up to snuff, as those are choices in a typical system. It was a silly question.

**The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine):** Before I call for questions and comments, this is a very important topic for all our families who are watching. We would like to keep the decorum in the House. I would appreciate the cooperation of all members. I know members can do it.

**Mr. Tony Martin (Sault Ste. Marie, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I want to put this question to the member who just spoke and who obviously is concerned about the lower income families who need child care.

This is from a mother and a worker in child care who at one point was a single mother. She says that the Conservative position on child care does not address availability of care, does not address enough spaces and available choices, does not address the research that early learning activities must be a part of the child's development, even if the parent is primary caregiver and does not address supports to parents, the issue of the seamless day. She says that tax cuts do not help low income families who do not have tangible money to pay.

This is from a mother who has lived this experience.

**Mr. Gary Goodyear:** Madam Speaker, as the member should already know, many of the programs mentioned in that letter are already in place. There are already programs out there where parents can put their children into early kindergarten, for example, and the day care centres would still be there if that was the choice of the parent.

I would like to express once again and request that the members in the House listen very carefully. This is not only about tax cuts. I will repeat it and I will say this really slow. We are also requesting that there be credits that will definitely benefit lower income earners. The Liberals have put in place a tax exemption rule that only helps more wealthy Canadians.

Again, I would encourage the member to listen very carefully. We are encouraging moving forward on the day care program, but in a way that includes tax cuts and credits that will help all Canadians equally.

If the member were to study the Liberal program, he would find that there are not enough seats either.

• (1230)

**Ms. Rona Ambrose (Edmonton—Spruce Grove, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the Leader of the Opposition for tackling this important issue. I would also like to commend my colleague, the member for Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar and the Conservative critic on social development, for her fine work on this issue.

I would like to begin by outlining the Conservative Party position on child care so there are no mistakes and no questions as to why we have raised this issue today.

### Supply

The Conservative Party understands the Liberals motivation to help parents so that quality child care is made more accessible. The problem is the Liberals intentions are misplaced. The Conservative Party believes that parents, and not the federal government, are in the best position to determine which type of child care best suits their children. My party also believes that when it comes to child care, parents deserve options, something the current Liberal government seems unwilling to allow.

As the intergovernmental affairs critic for the Conservative Party, I feel a strong need to speak on this issue because child care and early childhood education are matters of provincial jurisdiction. All the provinces, as they are constitutionally empowered to do, have already established their own unique child care programs. It is the Conservative Party's position that all social programs are a matter of provincial jurisdiction.

Let me begin with some facts.

Canada has one of the highest international participation rates of mothers in the workforce. In fact, 70% of Canadian women with children under the age of six are working. This is a tremendous achievement for women. As a result, Statistics Canada recently reported that 53% of Canadian children are receiving some form of child care outside of the home and 25% of those children are enrolled in day care centres, up from 20% in 1995.

I imagine many child care advocates and the Liberal government believe these statistics reinforce their position that more funding for regulated child care spaces is required. However, it is important to note that while more children are in institutionalized day care, the number of children cared for by a relative has also gone up in the same timeframe, from 8% to 14%.

It seems we have two increasing but very distinct types of care emerging for children whose parents work: those who choose formal institutional care and those who choose to have their children cared for by a relative in what might be called informal arrangements. The Liberals seem to want to ignore this second form of care, but I will discuss that further later.

Recent information provided by a Vanier Institute study is also interesting in that it indicates that nine out of ten Canadians feel that in a two parent situation, ideally one parent should stay at home to raise the children. The study also indicated that almost all employed mothers would work part-time if they could afford it, as would 84% of fathers. Parents surveyed indicated that day care would be their last choice for child care.

I mentioned the Vanier Institute study and Statistics Canada information not to suggest that children must have a stay-at-home mother or father. Rather I use the study to demonstrate that parents want to have choices when it comes to child care. Increasing the number of day care spaces is not necessarily the only solution to providing parents with access to quality child care services.

The Statistics Canada information also indicates that within each province there has developed a different style of child care, with parents using commercial and non-profit centres as well as employing relatives to care for their children. The fact that in some provinces the percentage of use by parents of non-profit centres is

higher than in others demonstrates that different types of day care systems are needed in different provinces.

It has become clear that the Liberal government is not interested in offering the provinces different arrangements, and this fact was glaringly demonstrated this past weekend as the federal government was unable to reach a deal with the provinces.

The provinces have been understandably leery of the Liberal Party of Canada's pledge to pour \$5 billion into child care and create 250,000 child care spaces by 2009.

The Liberal plan to create a "national system of early learning and child care, a system based on four key principles..." has been met with increasing criticism by the provinces, primarily because it infringes on their jurisdiction and because it does not reflect the uniqueness of their situations.

It is as a result of this increasing pressure by the provinces and the Conservative Party that the Minister of Social Development has begun to backtrack. A national system of early learning has quickly become a national strategy, and its most recent incarnation, a national vision. Just last week the minister caved under pressure and agreed to allow funding to private, regulated day cares, upsetting many of his core supporters among child care advocates.

Also of concern to the provinces is the clear lack of understanding as to where the program is going and how much it is going to cost in the long run.

● (1235)

The Minister of Social Development has remained vague about the future of the proposed child care program, stating in January in a speech:

You start out with a commitment of \$5 million over five years for a national early learning and child care system based on QUAD principles...Then you're faced with the challenge of how you can translate that into a system. Five billion dollars over five years—that's a lot of money, but it's a modest amount in terms of a system. A system costs a lot more than that.

The minister has also remained unclear about who will foot the bill for a national program after the five years. As such, the cost of the program has become a genuine concern to the provinces and taxpayers in general. If one is to examine the Quebec program, hailed by both the Liberal government and child care advocates as a model for the national program, it becomes clear that \$5 billion will not get the provinces very far.

The province of Quebec currently spends \$1.4 billion on its \$7 a day child care program, providing spaces for nearly 190,000 children. However, 35,000 children remain on waiting lists. It is estimated that it costs the Quebec government \$15,000 a year to care for every young child enrolled in the program, and these costs are expected to rise.

Child care advocates often suggest that a program in which parents make 20% co-payments be implemented in Canada. If this were to take place, taxpayers could expect to fund a program which would cost \$10 billion a year.

One by one, the provinces have expressed their concern about the proposed federal program. Their apprehensions are understandable and are what prevented an agreement from being brokered this weekend.

The Government of British Columbia has questioned the federal government's long term commitment to a national child care program and is concerned that the provinces will be left paying for the program after five years.

New Brunswick, a province in which 57% of its pre-school children are in child care but only 21% in day care, has also expressed reservations about the federal government's plan. The minister of family and community services in New Brunswick stated that he "wants to make sure we are able to provide a service that is tailor-made for the children of New Brunswick".

The province of Alberta has been particularly vocal about maintaining its autonomy. The province's minister of children's services has expressed concern over the fact that none of the \$5 billion will be available to stay-at-home parents.

Alberta has been particularly supportive of stay-at-home parents and recently introduced the "kin child care funding program". The kin child care funding program is unique in that it provides eligible low income families with \$240 per month per child to pay relatives to care for their children. The program provides families with flexible alternatives for child care where there might be limited options, for example, in rural locations or for parents who work non-traditional hours, like shift work.

Alberta's Children's Services also offers other programs such as the child care subsidy, which provides financial assistance to Alberta families with pre-school children who attend a licensed day care centre, an approved family day home or a licensed out of school care centre.

The government of Alberta is concerned that a national child care program will not offer the parents of its province enough choices. It has already 26,000 spaces in 533 licensed day cares. However, only 20,000 children are using those spaces. It, therefore, seems unlikely that offering more day care spaces is the solution for Alberta.

I have also discussed Quebec's day care program at length. However, it is clear that the province has a well established system, one which the Quebec government feels meets its appropriate standards. The Ministère de l'Emploi, de la Solidarité sociale et de la Famille has made it clear the province wants the money without any conditions and that the province should not have to be held accountable for how that money is spent.

The point I wish to make is that good child care programs currently exist in the provinces. The federal government has no jurisdiction to meddle with these programs or to force the provinces to conform. What the federal government should be focused on is helping parents access these programs by empowering them financially.

The Conservative Party believes that parents deserve more options and more choices. As such, our party will continue to support all existing child benefit programs and introduce broad based tax relief

### *Supply*

to provide parents with the freedom to make the decision that best suits the needs of their families.

It is the Conservatives' strong belief that this is a matter of provincial jurisdiction. I do not wish to suggest that the federal government has no role in early childhood education and development. However, that role must focus primarily on providing assistance to Canadian parents.

The Conservative Party is in favour of child care choices being available to parents of all provinces and allowing parents to make child care decisions for themselves.

• (1240)

**Hon. Eleni Bakopanos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Social Development (Social Economy), Lib.):** Madam Speaker, as we have been hearing all day, again it is a question of choices. As I said earlier, and I will put it on the record one more time, we are not against choices.

I would like to ask the hon. member to comment on a study done by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, which stated that the opposition's tax proposals for low income and middle income Canadians would disproportionately benefit men and wealthier families at the expense of women and low income to moderate income families. In fact, the study shows that 36% of families with incomes over \$70,000 would receive 88% of the total tax decrease. The other one-third of the total value of the tax cut would go to a mere 7% of families with incomes of \$150,000 or more.

By trying to wrap the tax cuts in child's clothing, the hon. member is once again reiterating what was said earlier this morning: it is tax cuts, tax cuts and tax cuts. Absolutely nothing in what she has said today leads me to believe that her party actually does believe in quality child care or in the four principles that the government has put forth and on which we are trying to work with the provinces in order to establish some national standards.

Again, I have heard nothing in the member's speech in terms of how her party would not impose, as she implied in her speech, but collaborate with the provinces, because there is a system in some provinces. At the moment, that system needs an infusion of extra dollars, which we have put on the table in the amount of \$5 billion over five years. Perhaps there will be more in the future if the economy continues to grow.

I have heard nothing in the hon. member's speech or in the speech of her leader this morning which would lead me to believe that they actually believe in a regulated child care system. Obviously she does not agree, but what proposals does the hon. member bring forth to ensure that there will be quality accessible child care across this country? And what role will the federal government play? Obviously she says, "No role".

**Ms. Rona Ambrose:** Madam Speaker, quite a number of questions are wrapped up in those remarks.

First, let me be clear that the leader of the Conservative Party of Canada, the leader of the official opposition, has used and accessed all types of day care for his own young children, as he indicated in his speech this morning on the supply day motion on day care. He and his wife, both being young professionals in the workforce, have experienced all of these things at first hand.

### *Supply*

We have always said that we are committed to providing all types of day care choices to young parents. We are in favour of money being transferred to the provinces to supplement and continue to fund regulated day care spaces, but the \$5 billion over five years that has been promised by the government to the provinces actually will only increase the funded day care spaces from 7% to 10%. If we look at those numbers, we see that only one in four children across Canada is actually using funded regulated day care spaces. The parents of four out of five children in Canada are not receiving some sort of assistance to provide child care for their children.

In addition to looking at increased funding for day care spaces for the provinces, we would like to see the finance minister in this budget also consider, in addition to tax credits, ideas like income splitting and changes to the tax system, which young parents have been calling for this past number of years, that is, in particular, treating dual and single income families equally so that they are not punished under the tax system.

**Mr. Paul Forseth (New Westminster—Coquitlam, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the issue of discrimination is very much inherent in the Liberal system. We decry the one child policy in China, the government control, and all the fines and penalties against families for lifestyle choices, but we have a Canadian version of that same kind of government fine.

Two families are living on the same cul-de-sac, with the same style of house and the same income, but if one has a single income and the other has a dual income, the system fines those parents because of their lifestyle choice. The government takes several thousand dollars away from them; let us say that both families have a family income of \$100,000. That is government discrimination; let us try to find some international parallel to it. It is completely socially unacceptable. We want to fix that. The member alluded to that, so perhaps she could expand on how our party would end that kind of discrimination against families.

●(1245)

**Ms. Rona Ambrose:** Madam Speaker, as I alluded to, there have been discussions, actually on both sides of the House for years, but particularly in industry and among economists, about how the tax system is very unfair to families, and about how in particular it is unfair to working women and to women who would like to make choices of their own. For myself as a young working woman, I find this policy particularly offensive because it discriminates against me. It discriminates against my opportunity to make choices as a young working woman. I agree that the tax system can be changed to help young families, but in particular, it can also be made much friendlier to young working women.

**Hon. John McKay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I am splitting my time with the hon. member for Ahuntsic, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Social Development.

Supporting low income and modest income families is a priority for the government. We have delivered on our commitment in a number of ways through different instruments, including tax relief and, more specifically, by providing access to additional funds to help offset the costs of raising their children in a safe and supportive environment.

The government recognizes the important contributions that parents make to society. Parenting, as many members know, is never easy. I have five children, and frankly, I find that being Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance is a cakewalk compared to parenting five children.

It is particularly difficult if one is from a low income or modest income family, because of course money is always then an issue. On behalf of the government and other members of the Commons, let me begin by acknowledging these challenges and sacrifices of low income and modest income families on behalf of their children in order to provide a nurturing environment in which they can be raised despite their financial constraints, which are for many a constant struggle.

I would also be remiss if I did not remind members of the steps the government has taken to help low income and modest income families raise happy and healthy children. These measures are designed to offset the costs incurred by having children and to recognize the financial status of the families themselves. More important, these measures put money back in the hands of people who need it most, and I think that is a significant distinction. The help we have tried to provide is targeted to people who need the most help so that they can create safer and more nurturing environments for their children.

As hon. members will recall, the 2004 budget reaffirmed this enduring commitment by announcing a number of measures to help Canadian parents with their responsibilities. For instance, we accelerated the implementation of the multilateral framework agreement on early learning and child care. We introduced a new Canada learning bond. We enhanced the Canada education savings grant, matching rates for low income and middle income families. These measures are designed to help families through every stage of a child's development.

Members will also recall what was done prior to the most recent budget. In the year 2000, we introduced a five year tax reduction plan. I would draw the House's attention to the fact that in the five year plan of \$100 billion in total, three-quarters of that was directed to benefits for individuals, with the most relief going to low income and modest income families with children. In 2004-05 the government's tax reduction plan will have reduced personal income taxes by 21% on average. Families with children benefit even more with an average tax savings in the order of 27%.

May I also remind the House that under this plan, families with children also benefited from reduced tax rates for all income levels, the elimination of the deficit reduction surtax, and the restoration of the full indexation of the personal income tax system, which protected families against automatic increases and erosion of benefits caused by inflation. The first number of measures were specifically targeted to people with low and modest incomes; the latter number applies to all tax filers.

The plan also included significant enrichments of the Canada child tax benefit, possibly the most significant initiative of this government in quite a number of years. It is to these changes that I would like to draw members' attention specifically.



The Canada child tax benefit, CCTB, is the main vehicle through which the government achieves its commitment to generally assist families with costs associated with raising children. It is a non-taxable amount paid monthly to help eligible families with the cost of raising children under the age of 18.

•(1250)

Since its inception this program has been significantly enriched. For example, the 2000 budget and the 2000 economic statement and budget update enriched the CCTB by an additional \$2.6 billion. The CCTB enhancements under the five year tax reduction plan continue to benefit families with children, with the final steps implemented in July 2004.

These include increasing the family net income threshold at which the national child benefit supplement, the NCB supplement, is fully phased out and the CCTB benefit begins to be phased out, and reducing the phase-out rate of the base benefit of the CCTB. Taken together, these measures will ensure that more Canadians will receive CCTB benefits.

The 2003 budget went even further and announced further substantial increases in the NCB supplement by annual amounts of \$150 per child in July 2003, \$185 in July 2005, and \$185 in July 2006. These enrichments translate into an increase of \$965 million per year in the NCB supplement of the CCTB by 2007.

Currently the CCTB provides \$9.1 billion annually in assistance to 3.5 million families, roughly 10% of the population, with annual benefits of up to \$2,719 for the first child, \$2,503 for the second child, and \$2,507 for each additional child. In fact, I would say it goes to probably more than 10% of the population of Canada.

With these increases, together with full indexation restored under the five year tax reduction plan, the minimum CCTB benefit is projected to reach \$3,243 for a first child, \$3,016 for a second, and \$3,020 for each additional child, by July 2007. Overall assistance to families with children through CCTB is projected to reach \$10 billion annually, an increase of over 100% since 1996. So from 1996 to 2007, we will see a 100% increase in the benefit.

From an individual family's point of view, this means that over the same period the maximum annual benefit for a first child under CCTB will have more than doubled from \$1,520 to \$3,243. That is \$1,723 more per year to help cover the costs associated with raising a child.

I would also like to add that the 2003 budget created a new child disability benefit. This benefit is paid for children qualifying for the disability tax credit, with the full \$1,653 per child benefit being paid to all families receiving the national child benefit supplement who have a qualifying child. The measure is expected to benefit 40,000 low income and modest income families and will represent an investment of \$50 million per year.

Given these initiatives, there could be no clearer evidence than this of the high priority the government attaches to families with children. The growth in the CCTB is a clear example of the government's efforts to put money in the hands of families of low and modest incomes.

### *Supply*

Let me conclude by saying the Government of Canada continues to work diligently on ways to support families of low and modest incomes. The government's record on tax relief for families with children is solid. From the perspective of government, strong arguments can be made that assisting families is not only the right thing to do but the smart thing to do.

The fact of the matter is that it is also an area in which this government has created a number of initiatives, many of which have been very well received by Canadians. The government can be counted on to continue its support for low income and modest income families and expand and improve the multitude of supports like the CCTB that we have already put in place.

•(1255)

**Ms. Rona Ambrose (Edmonton—Spruce Grove, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the hon. member and I have discussed as colleagues on the finance committee the issue of eliminating the discrepancy or the discrimination in the taxation system between dual and single income families, and how this obviously would be a benefit not only to working women and young parents but also to senior citizens. I wonder if the hon. member can commit to those kinds of changes in the tax system being in the upcoming budget.

**Hon. John McKay:** Madam Speaker, the short answer to the question is no. The budget will be delivered on February 23 at 4:00. I am sure that the hon. member's attention will be riveted to what the finance minister has to say.

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I want to thank the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance for laying out to the House a broad range of initiatives which have taken place over a series of budgets. It is very important to understand that every budget cannot address all issues. We can look at them over a period of time and see how children have been a very top priority of the Liberal Party.

I want to ask the member a question with regard to the tax relief for Canadians with low and modest incomes. I think the way everyone has been talking about it, that the Canada child tax benefit is in fact part of the tax system although it is a non-taxable payment, it is an effective way to target because the Canada child tax benefit is means tested. After a certain level of income, families cease getting that benefit.

Certainly the Canada child tax benefit is targeted at Canadians with low and modest incomes. Is the parliamentary secretary aware of any other efficient way to direct so-called tax cuts to Canadians with low and modest incomes without having them also automatically extend to the highest income earners because of our marginal tax rate system?

**Hon. John McKay:** Madam Speaker, the hon. member for Mississauga South has asked a very subtle question.

*Supply*

It is something that gives us some difficulty. Clearly on the face of it, if we simply raised thresholds, we would appear to be giving relief to all tax filers. If we merely lowered tax percentages, we would give relief to all tax filers. If we look at it more carefully, in terms of the benefit in thresholds or marginal rates, we would find that the disproportionate benefit goes to the upper and upper middle income tax filers. That makes it somewhat difficult to simply give a broad base tax relief if the decision is to target folks with low and middle incomes.

One of the ideas that came up at the finance committee which I thought was quite intriguing had to do with enhanced GST tax credits. A lot of people particularly at the low end of the spectrum have either no income on which to declare, or have income that is fairly modest. One of the benefits would be that an enhanced GST tax credit would benefit those who are at the lowest end of the socio-economic scale.

That is one of a myriad of ways in which the government could possibly look at the modification of things. A great number of witnesses at the finance committee had suggestions along those lines. It is not as if we are not aware of those.

The other point I want to make with regard to the CCTB is that it is a directed benefit that actually puts real cash into the hands of people who are, as the hon. member said, means tested.

• (1300)

**Hon. Eleni Bakopanos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Social Development (Social Economy), Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to address the motion tabled by the hon. member for Calgary Southwest on the question of reducing taxation for low and modest income Canadian families in the upcoming budget. For my part I would like to put the question into a larger context, because I believe the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance has already put it into context in terms of tax cuts, by examining the economic implications of child care for all Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Even as the Government of Canada was taming the deficit during the 1990s, it continued to invest in Canada's children. Indeed, in 1996, first ministers established children and families as a priority for joint action, and they remain at the forefront of the national policy agenda today.

As the October Speech from the Throne clearly states, investing in our children is the best investment we can make as a nation. Experts agree that the early years are the building blocks for a child's future. They establish the foundation for competence and coping skills that affect learning, behaviour and health in later life.

For that reason alone, it would make good sense to invest in children.

[*English*]

There are even more compelling reasons. If the early years are the building blocks for our children, it is equally true that our children are the building blocks for our future and that of our country. The future viability and prosperity of Canada depends on our children's ability to become adults who can thrive in an increasingly complex

global environment. That is why the Government of Canada has invested in children and their families.

By the end of this fiscal year, as my hon. colleague the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance said, the Government of Canada will have invested more than \$13 billion in programs that support children and families. We have invested in child benefits that have helped lift 55,000 children out of poverty in the year 2000 alone. We have expanded parental benefits to allow parents to remain at home with their infants for up to a year. We have developed new partnerships and joint initiatives with the provinces and territories from the national children's agenda, to the early childhood development agreement, to the multilateral framework on early learning and child care.

[*Translation*]

Yet for all the positive impact of this set of initiatives, there is a glaring omission. I speak, of course, of the need for an early learning and child care system in each province and territory.

The Canadian family has evolved dramatically over the past few decades. Close to 70% of mothers with children under age six now work outside the home. Everyone in this House agreed on this, even the Conservatives.

I want to emphasize that quality child care can help bring opportunities that might not otherwise exist for children whose families may face broader challenges

[*English*]

Too often parents of low income families cannot find quality accessible and affordable day care, contrary to what hon. members on the other side of the House have been saying all day. In Toronto alone in 2001, 17,000 low income children were on a waiting list for subsidized child care. In Montreal apparently the list is even longer. Across the country we have regulated child care spaces for only about 27% of young children with mothers in the workforce.

Low income parents in fact pay a high price for taking care of their children at home. By the time they put their children in school and start to look for work again, they may no longer have the skills to get well-paying jobs in a rapidly evolving economy.

That is why quality child care is so important. It allows both low income parents to work outside the home if they choose to do so. Not only does employment bring immediate economic benefits, but it also begins to reverse the cycle of poverty. By staying employed while their children are young, parents can continue to develop skills that will keep them employable in the knowledge economy, again if that is their choice.

•(1305)

[*Translation*]

Research shows that, over the long term, the right combination of income and service supports for all young children and families—including, I might add, children in middle-income families—pays handsome dividends. Every dollar invested generates a long-term payoff of between two and seven dollars. Quality child care is an important part of this economic equation.

[*English*]

I would like to make reference to the OECD report which was referred to earlier. In fact if the hon. members would take the time to read the report, they would see that it underlines the fact that with a good early learning and child care system in the country, the quality of life for children and their families will be increased.

[*Translation*]

It is for that reason that the Government of Canada has committed to spend \$5 billion to develop an early learning and child care system in each province and territory over the next five years.

We know this money is well spent—that the benefits far outweigh the costs. Not just for the positive impact on our children families, but also for the economic returns for Canada as a nation. That is exactly what was said in the OECD report.

[*English*]

The Government of Canada is working hand in hand with its provincial and territorial partners to create an early learning and child care system that is based on the principles that experts and parents say matter: quality, universally inclusive, accessible and developmental.

The motion being considered today stresses the need for the child care system to respect provincial jurisdiction and as I come from the province of Quebec, I think I am very sensitive to that issue. I have not heard, as I said when I put my first question earlier this morning to the hon. critic for social development and early learning, in what way will the Conservative Party work with the provinces in order to make sure that the system that is in place, or the system that is not in place, will in fact develop? The Conservatives do agree, and the last speaker from that party said so, that there is a need for quality day care across the country.

The new initiative will give the provinces and territories the flexibility to address their own particular needs and circumstances. They will use the money to make existing programs and services better and to create new quality spaces. I am still waiting for the answer from the Conservative Party on exactly how it would contribute to that, besides the issue of tax cuts.

While the specific impacts of the initiative will vary across the country, Canadians can expect to see more child care providers and early childhood education, more children with access to safe, secure and stimulating early learning environments, and higher rates of retention among early childhood educators. I repeat that is exactly what the OECD report said is needed.

*Supply*

[*Translation*]

At a meeting last Friday of ministers responsible for social services, the federal, provincial and territorial ministers took another step forward in realizing our joint vision. In the words of the co-chair, the hon. Chester Gillan, Minister of Health and Social Services in Prince Edward Island, the provinces and territories were extremely pleased with the progress. We all agree on the need for clear accountability that allows citizens to track the progress of their respective governments on child care.

The time has come for an early learning and child care system in every province and territory—for the sake of our children, our families and communities, and our country.

Once again, I will emphasize the fact that this is precisely what was said in the OECD study, that Canada needed this system. I was very encouraged by everything that has been said by the hon. members from the Conservative Party of Canada. They agree that we need an accessible, quality system all across Canada.

However, they have said nothing about how to set up such a system. What methods, what tools will they adopt to have this system all across Canada? Neither have they answered the question of their view of the system currently in place in Quebec. How are they going to collaborate with Quebec to ensure that they have the tools necessary to set up a system like Quebec's all across Canada? I see nothing about this.

We know that the hon. members from the Conservative Party of Canada are always talking about giving money to parents, but this system exists right now. How are they proposing to encourage this system?

We on our side are working with the provinces and territories. We have \$5 billion on the table. We also want to provide parents with choices, with quality choices on child care.

•(1310)

[*English*]

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Nepean—Carleton, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it is clear from the studies which came out just this past week that the Canadian people do not want the system that the Liberals are proposing.

What else is clear is the difference that is forming in today's debate. On this side of the House we believe that parents, not politicians, should decide what is best for their children. We on this side of the House believe in parents.

What the government would do is effectively expropriate billions of tax dollars and put that money into a single option that is not universal. It would exclude stay at home parents, family based care, community based care, linguistic and religious institutions that might provide care. It would exclude 95% of the options, and the Liberals call it universal. It is universal in only one way. Everybody gets to pay. Even if they do not like what is on the menu, they have to pick up the tab.

How would the member, while looking into the eyes of stay at home parents, explain to them why they should be forced to pay for a system which they do not believe in and which they do not wish to use?

*Supply*

**Hon. Eleni Bakopanos:** Madam Speaker, I would have no problem looking at parents and telling them that they have that choice at the moment. In fact, they have those choices based on the type of tax measures we have already brought into the system for low and middle income families.

They also have a choice if they choose to work. They also have a choice under our parental leave to stay home for a year if they wish. If they wish to go back to work, we want to make sure that those children, who we care as much about as the other members on the opposite side, have a system that offers them the best possible tools to grow and become contributing members in our society.

What we are talking about today is providing children with the a foundation to become members of this society. However, to have that basis we need to have a system, which is what we are talking about today. I have heard nothing from the other side in terms of how they will contribute to the existing system that is uneven.

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre:** Canadians do not want a system.

**Hon. Eleni Bakopanos:** Yes, they do. The polls say that they do want a system.

The difference between our party and that party is that it wants to force its vision of society on families but that is not the family's vision.

**Mr. Mario Silva (Davenport, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Social Development has spoken passionately many times, both here in the House and in committee, about the building blocks for a social economy.

There is no question in my mind and in her mind that the legislation is very important for building those building blocks for the social economy.

On the issue of child care, which is essential for so many parents and, of course, for the province of Ontario and the city of Toronto, which is where I was elected, about 20,000 people are on a waiting list for subsidized spaces. No matter how much money is given to parents, there will never be enough spaces in the system. We do have to be aggressive in implementing this particular policy.

The federal Liberal government has been trying for many years to get all provincial parties to the table in order to put a comprehensive child care system in place but most provinces in the past have resisted. Perhaps the hon. member could give us her views on the social economy.

• (1315)

**Hon. Eleni Bakopanos:** Madam Speaker, it is a fact that a lot of the day care centres are part of the social economy, or l'économie sociale, in Quebec. Those day care centres do provide day care and an educational early learning program that is very beneficial for children from low and middle income families. That is the type of social enterprise that will be encouraged by this government and I am assuming by the provinces when we reach the agreement that we are working toward.

**Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle.

I rise today to speak in support of the Conservative motion that reads:

That the House call upon the government to address the issue of child care by fulfilling its commitment to reduce taxes for low and modest income families in the upcoming budget, and, so as to respect provincial jurisdiction, ensure additional funds for child care are provided directly to parents.

I support the motion because I strongly believe that parents, not the government nor any other government for that matter, are in the best position to determine what is best for their children based on their own values, their own culture and their own traditions.

I would like to read an excerpt from a report called "Canadian Attitudes on the Family". I reads:

...many Canadian parents feel trapped by economic pressures and are not able to make the sort of choices they would like for their families. Sometimes, of course, this is unavoidable. Economic reality has a way of interfering with our dreams, and everyone has to live within their means. In this case, however, the Canadian tax system is clearly stacked against the interests of Canadian families...

I agree wholeheartedly. This tax system is stacked against the interests of Canadian families.

The Liberal government's national child care strategy does absolutely nothing to address the problems with the tax system. It does absolutely nothing to provide for the choices that parents need to address, the specific and varying needs of their children, inasmuch as the proposed \$5 billion that the government will be bringing forward over five years is slotted only for government run day care centres and educational programs.

The government needs to stop pushing Canadian families in one direction, which is toward government run day care centres. Instead, it must allow Canadian families to make their own choice with as level a playing field between the alternative choices as possible.

We advocate choice because the Conservative Party of Canada truly trusts Canadians to make decisions that are in their best interests, in the best interests of their children and, ultimately, in the best interests of society as a whole.

Last week there was an article in the *National Post* entitled "Listen to the Parents". The article reads:

It is worth noting that the study shows nearly half of all Canadian mothers and fathers still do their own parenting. And the category that displayed the biggest increase was care at home by relatives, such as grandparents, rather than in formal daycare centres. All of which suggests Canadian parents are still not sold on the notion that their children should be raised by strangers in an institutional setting.

However the Liberal government has totally ignored this most important aspect of child care. The Liberals "one size fits all" day care strategy ignores the realities of Canadians' delicate work-life balance. It ignores the realities of rural Canadian families who do not have access to government run facilities, who work varied hours, or who are self-employed on their farms and therefore not eligible for any day care assistance despite the fact that many Canadian farmers and farm families are living below the poverty line.

Many farmers, depending on the way their farm is structured and the way it is set up for tax purposes, are ineligible to use receipts for day care on their farming operation. Although the most dangerous time for young children to be on the farm is harvest time when everyone is tired, the tax structure does not, in some cases, allow parents to use a child care receipt as a deduction on their income tax.

The government ignores the fact that many Canadian families choose to have one parent stay at home with their children. Where is the assistance or subsidies to help these struggling families?

• (1320)

One of my former constituents, a long time neighbour and friend, Joyce Oberg, has been a home day care provider in my home town of Killam for many years. Joyce rightfully points out in a recent letter she sent to me that not all parents work Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and yet there is no government run day care that is open seven days a week ready to accommodate parents who work those types of shifts. Why should these parents be short-shifted by a government that ignores or is oblivious to this fact and to many other realities of the work-life balance in Canada?

Many of my colleagues today have spoken about the financial burden that has been imposed on Canadian families. They have come forward advocating tax cuts that go directly to parents to pay for their preferred choice and in providing care for their children. I wholeheartedly agree with those tax cuts.

However I have noted that what many have neglected to talk about today is the horrific stress that work imposes on Canadian families and the growing need to provide more flexibility in the workforce to alleviate those stresses and the stresses placed on society in general.

A recent article in the *Ottawa Citizen* stated that, "An alarming number of Canadians are at risk of developing serious health problems unless something is done to redress the balance between work and family life".

The *Ottawa Citizen* referenced a Health Canada study which found that:

The health care system is completely overburdened and a large part of that is because people are completely overloaded. They have way too much to do and no time to do it in. People are more likely to be absent from work, take mental health leaves, have stress episodes, depression.... You're going to see direct and indirect costs to productivity.

A number of factors have created this result, including: 25% of the population is working 50 hours or more a week, which is up from 10% in 1991; employees are more likely to work overtime without being compensated, which adds to more stress; 70% of all workers are parents with an average of two children each; 60% had elder care responsibilities; and 13% were what is called the sandwich generation that cares for both children and for an elderly relative.

What do the authors of this study recommend? They recommend that the government take the lead in issues of child and elder care, to lead by example in letting employees work flexible schedules and find ways to reduce the "financial penalties" associated with parenthood. This study is drawing reference to the fact that there are financial penalties right now in the tax system that need to be addressed.

### *Supply*

The Liberal government has failed dismally in this regard. It has failed dismally because it does not understand the social and financial realities of Canadian families. We would implore the government to ensure that, in the 2005 federal budget, low and middle income Canadians are given tax relief, tax relief that will allow them to make the choice in how to care for their children, whether that be in their own homes, with a relative, with a neighbour or in a government run day care centre. The operative words are "choice, freedom and flexibility".

The Conservative Party of Canada is asking the Liberal government to allow Canadian parents to parent, allow them to make the choices and allow them to make decisions without the government's intrusion, obstruction or penalties.

• (1325)

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I want to be very clear that I am very much in favour of supporting a first step on a national child care program. It is one of the tools that we have available for parents. The choice and flexibility are also important.

The member commented a couple of times about the objective of providing tax relief for low and modest income Canadians. We have heard the rhetoric. Could the member explain exactly how a tax break for low and modest income Canadians can be delivered without having the same benefit go to the higher income earners in Canada? Can he be very specific about what changes would be made in the Income Tax Act to specifically target low and modest income Canadians?

**Mr. Kevin Sorenson:** Madam Speaker, we, in this party, have suggested that we allow Canadian parents to make the decisions. In my own circumstances as a farmer and the owner of a small business, there have been times when we have had to use day care facilities. We have used babysitters, family members and one of us at times stayed at home.

We are suggesting that the marketplace can always make the decisions and that it will react. If more money were put into the pockets of young mothers and young families who are raising their children which would allow them the opportunity to choose with their own dollars where they would best want to have their children—

**Hon. Eleni Bakopanos:** How?

**Mr. Kevin Sorenson:** We do it by increasing the credits. There are many different ways of doing it. We allow so much for the child credit. We have always suggested that we need to encourage this and we need to allow parents to stay at home.

Members opposite are hollering and screaming over there. Government members typically stand in this place and say that they know what is best. They know what is best for the farmers. They come up with a program and the farmers do not like it. They know what is best when it comes to provincial jurisdictions and they jump into those jurisdictions. Now they are telling us that they know what is best when it comes to parenting. The only way it will work is if we have a government day care centre that everyone will be able to access.

*Supply*

People and critics across this country have made it clear that even with a government day care centre, not everyone will be able to access it. There will be many people who will not access it. Let us give them a better credit so that they can choose the facility they want to use. Put more money back into their pockets. Allow them the opportunity to choose.

**Hon. Eleni Bakopanos:** How?

**Mr. Kevin Sorenson:** Members opposite continue to say "how?". We do not have a revenue problem with the government; we have a spending problem with the government. Now the Liberals are looking for ways to rip off more money from hardworking Canadian taxpayers, and I say shame.

**Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Saskatoon—Wanuskewin, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I have three quick questions here and he may need to take notes so he can give me intelligent and wise responses.

Earlier today, we heard the minister talk about the whole issue of parents needing to suppress the guilt. It is a given that parents would feel guilty because they do not have enough time to spend with their kids. Parents have to live with that and it is par for the course. In effect, he was inferring that we need to suppress the guilt.

When there is guilt about something in a person's life, and I know the Liberal minister's Ph.D. is not in psychology, I would have thought the person should do something about the root cause that is creating the guilt. He is inferring that we simply suppress that guilt. Do we not try to nudge or move to the ideal of spending more time with our children instead of just living with it, going with the flow and suppressing the guilt, as he put it?

I believe that parents would like the choice. Maybe there will continue to be many families where both parents work full time outside the home. Some will choose full time, some part time and some not at all. I would like the member's response to those questions.

• (1330)

**Mr. Kevin Sorenson:** Madam Speaker, as far as the minister's comments are concerned, I was in committee this morning and did not hear him talk about guilt for putting children in child care. The guilt thing is part of what society is. Parents will be putting children into day care centres. I have had to use babysitters on occasion. However, there are also choices.

It boils down to two things. First, there is absolute need. In some cases, there may only be one parent who has to work and they need help. The other thing is the choice of priorities. Some people have the ability to decide that one parent stays home. Whether it be the husband or the wife, we leave that up to them. Parents must decide what is best for their children.

**Mr. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC):** Madam Speaker, there are three main things I would like to discuss today.

First, is the issue of the limits of the federal government. It is important that part of this babysitting debate is centred around the acceptable limits of government intrusion into our lives.

Second, is the issue of the quality of babysitting. Many of the arguments from the proponents of a national babysitting program

have made statements concerning the fact that only a government-run, government-delivered babysitting program can meet qualifiers.

Third, is the issue of the matter of choice. If the House does indeed decide that we should provide further assistance to families to ease the burden of rearing children, how best can we deliver that assistance?

On the issue of the proper role of the federal government, I must say that the Liberal government is giving a whole new meaning to the term nanny state. Not trusting Canadians to make their own decisions about child care, the government is again stepping into unchartered territory of government control. We used to believe that it was the role of parents and guardians to raise children, but now we have a government that pretends that the raising of children is now a federal responsibility. Is there any aspect of society that the government recognizes as being outside of its scope? Is there any area of our lives that we can be sure the government will not tread on? I fear that with this government, the answer is no.

On the matter of quality, the rhetoric coming from the backers of a state-run child rearing program is disturbing. I sat in committee where I heard one proponent of this notion saying that early childhood development starts in the womb, that waiting until the baby is actually born before addressing early learning is placing the child at a disadvantage. My wife is about to deliver our first child and to date she has not gone once to a day care centre to allow our unborn child to have access to this form of early childhood learning. I guess we are letting our child down. I guess we have a lot to answer for, that my wife is not going to day care pre-birth.

The basic premise of the early learning argument is that early learning cannot happen unless the child is in a state-run day care centre, and I have a big problem with that. I know people who offer babysitting programs from their homes. I have close family who do this. I challenge any bureaucrat to deliver the quality of care that these people provide. My relatives who babysit from their homes offer a wide variety of activities for the children they watch: arts and crafts, field trips to museums, sports, reading exercises, and the list goes on, and all this without any form of certification from any level of government. It is shocking that we are letting people provide care without being certified from a government program. I am really concerned about this. Note the sarcasm in my voice.

I can think back to the times when I was cared for by my grandmother. To state that she did not enhance my early childhood development is an outright falsehood. I can think of many important lessons she taught me, as well as the socializing aspect of growing up with several of my cousins. The Liberal babysitting program offers nothing for those options for families.

I would even argue that not only can family members provide similar levels of early childhood development, in many cases that level of care is superior because the bottom line is that nobody cares for a child more than that child's family. The love a parent, a grandparent or any other family member has for their child or grandchild surpasses the love that the government-licensed day care provider working in a government-run facility could ever provide.

This is not to detract from the dedication of institutionalized day care providers. In many cases they choose to go into the field because they love children and they enjoy caring for them. However, I do not think anyone could argue that family members do not provide a unique level of care. The argument cannot be made that only government-licensed institutional facilities can provide early childhood learning.

The last thing I wish to speak about is the question of choice. In typical Liberal fashion, the government is using circular logic to justify the idea of socialized babysitting. The stat has been used that around 70% of mothers are in the workforce. I heard a member of the NDP say that those 70% have chosen to be in the workforce. Many women choose to re-enter the workforce to further their own career and they make a conscious choice to do so, but how many parents are there in Canada who would love to have one parent stay at home to raise the child, but cannot because they need the extra income to maintain their households?

This entire issue is centred around the question of taxation. We have a situation where people need to have two incomes just to pay their tax burdens, so we need two parents in the workforce. What is the answer? We spend more tax dollars on providing a service because both parents have to be in the workforce. It is a circular argument.

• (1335)

The Strategic Council polled 1,500 Canadians across the country on a range of family issues. It found that 82% of respondents agreed with the statement that governments should change the tax law in Canada to make it easier for parents with young children to afford to have one parent stay at home if they choose. About 76% of respondents stated that they would prefer to have a parent stay at home with the children if finances and other circumstances made it possible.

How many families face such a huge tax burden that they are forced back into the workplace? How many families would make that decision to have one parent stay at home if they had the extra income?

However, instead of looking at tax credits and direct funding to parents or other incentives to allow this, the government is embarking on a program that would take an enormous amount of tax dollars to provide. We have seen some of the statistics. The government says that it can do it for perhaps \$5 billion over five years. In 1999 a study by the Department of Health estimated that it would cost \$12 billion to \$15 billion annually to provide a universal system. That does not sound like we are in the same ball park. We know the Liberals have numeric dyslexia over the surplus. I think this is another example; however, in this case, they are underestimating the cost.

The government's program has a one-size-fits-all approach that does not allow a choice for parents. We have seen other provincial models where direct funding goes to the parents.

I would like to address something that was brought up by one of the members over there. He said the length of waiting lists for institutionalized day care is dramatic in some regions. What we saw in other provinces is that when they provided that funding directly to

### *Supply*

the parents and they had that money in their hands to make their choice, whether it is to pay a family member to provide the care, a neighbour, a synagogue, a church or a mosque, the wait list for institutional day care goes down dramatically.

I received numerous e-mails from stay-at-home parents who are furious that the government's plan leaves them out. I support this motion because it places choice in the hands of parents, it puts money back into the pockets of families, and it keeps governments out of the business of raising children.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I truly envy my colleague and the ideal childhood he just spoke of where his grandparents loved him, took him to the museum, read to him and all the rest.

I wonder whether my colleague realizes that thousands of families in Quebec and Canada are not as lucky. In fact, thousands of families are poor and should probably use the money my colleague wants to give in order to buy milk or diapers for their children. What does he hope to achieve for these people if suitable child care services are not set up by the provinces?

• (1340)

[*English*]

**Mr. Andrew Scheer:** Madam Speaker, I did have access to a grandmother for some of my day care. Both my parents had to work to pay the excessive tax burden they faced. I spent time at day cares and with babysitters, both neighbourhood babysitters and a babysitter who came to our home. I have experienced a wide variety. Nothing compared to the family members who provided that care for me, as great as was all the other care.

I do not doubt her sincere intentions on this. I know she approaches this question out of a legitimate concern. However, I think my colleague missed the point because when we provide those dollars directly into the hands of parents, they can make those choices themselves. We do not need to have to pump it into a system, a government-run facility, and have all the examples that we have seen of how governments deliver services. We should put the money back into the hands of parents, let them make those choices, let them find out what they need to do for their own children to get those things the member mentioned, and let them provide the care for their own kids.

**Hon. Eleni Bakopanos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Social Development (Social Economy), Lib.):** Madam Speaker, speaking of the type of supports we have given families, I think the hon. member missed the whole speech of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance on the amount of tax cuts we have made and the types of support we have provided, such as the child tax benefit.

*Supply*

However, I thought it was a way of demeaning the whole debate by talking about babysitting. We are not talking about babysitting. We are talking about early learning and child care. There is a huge difference, and it is by choice. It is by choice because we have increased the limit on the child care expense deduction from \$4,000 to \$7,000 a year for each child under seven years of age. We have provided the child disability benefit for low and modest income families to provide up to \$1,600 per year for a child with a disability. We also have reduced net personal income taxes for families with children by at least 21%. Since they are very good at quoting different studies, I will quote the Caledon Institute. It said, "at the current level the child tax benefit reduced the rate of poverty among families with children by 25%". There is more to come in the budget.

When the hon. member refers to babysitting, does he not agree that there should be a system in place for those families who choose to put their children in a child care system? Does he object to those families, because his vision of society is not the vision of society that we share in the House?

**Mr. Andrew Scheer:** Madam Speaker, first, I thank the hon. member for making my point. When we reduce taxes through tax credits, we reduce child poverty. I could not have put it better myself. I think it basically backs up everything I said.

The whole premise of my speech was on choice. When we put the dollars directly into the hands of parents, if they choose an institutional day care with early learning programs, they can do so. They do not need to have all those funds go into one size fits all approaches.

Parents who choose an institutional form of day care will have the funds. Those who choose to stay at home will have the funds. Those who choose to send their children to a neighbourhood babysitter, a mosque, a synagogue or church to provide those forms of day care will have that choice too.

I do not know why the Liberals are anti-choice on this question.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ):** Madam Speaker, first of all, I want to point out that I will be sharing my time with the member for Beauport—Limoilou.

It is as critic for families and caregivers, as well as a woman, a mother and also the grandmother of two wonderful grandchildren, Alexy and Tiffany, that I am speaking this afternoon to the Conservative Party motion. The Bloc Québécois categorically opposes this motion because we have established a very good system in Quebec.

It is simple. First, child care is part of family policy and that falls exclusively under Quebec's jurisdiction. In this matter, Quebec and the other provinces should at any time be able to opt out, with full compensation, of the federal program the government is trying to implement.

Second, the money to be used for setting up the child care network should be transferred to Quebec and the provinces, since family policy is a provincial jurisdiction.

Third, by giving money directly to the parents, the federal government would be going against the concept of respecting jurisdictions.

The Conservative motion is totally contradictory. On one hand, they advocate respecting provincial jurisdictions, while on the other hand they want the federal government to intervene directly with the families.

It was already clear in the Liberal Party's election platform that this system would be established with a lot of conditions that would infringe directly on the provinces' areas of jurisdiction. Four standards were established: quality, ensuring that the provinces would regulate the daycares and their staffs; universality, making the daycares available to all children; accessibility, establishing a program that is affordable for all parents; and child development through learning. These are standards that have already all been achieved in Quebec's day care system.

The Bloc Québécois had to ask a number of questions in the House in order to get the government to acknowledge the expertise and effectiveness of the day care services in Quebec and honour its commitment in the Speech from the Throne to fully respect the provincial jurisdictions.

In fact, we asked more than 18 questions in the House to determine the real intentions of the Liberal government, namely whether or not it would respect the jurisdictions of Quebec and the other provinces in this regard. We are still waiting for the answer.

However, several Liberal ministers have expressed their views to the media in this regard. I quote the Minister of Canadian Heritage, who said in *Le Soleil* of June 4, 2004: "The money will go to Yves Séguin without restrictions and it will be up to Claude Bécharard to negotiate with him. ...Mr. Séguin can decide to use this money elsewhere." In addition, on two occasions when the Prime Minister was being interviewed on Radio-Canada, once on June 3, 2004, and another time last December 14, he said that Quebec would receive its \$5 billion share without any conditions. Finally, my honourable colleague from Human Resources and Skill Development said in this House last November 1st:

The Liberal government of Quebec is capable of sharing common objectives with the other provinces and having comparable indicators, as it has shown in the case of health, while having an agreement tailored specifically to Quebec's priorities. This is what we are going to be doing.

Let us hope that they will say the same thing here as well and that they will finally give us a clear, unequivocal answer.

Quebec has had its own plan since 1998. All we want are the funds that the federal government owes us to enable us to develop the 30,000 places that are still missing in order for us to achieve our objective of 200,000 places by 2006.

As Ms. Jocelyne Tougas said so well at the Canadian Council on Social Development's national conference:

—It is in an environment of stress, pollution and conflicts of all sorts that we have to raise our children and provide them with every opportunity to develop and grow, in the full knowledge that development and growth are only possible for those who belong to and identify with the group.



• (1345)

That is why structured childcare is important, so children can succeed at school, grow healthy and strong and become independent.

The OECD believes that Quebec has the best child care system in Canada and one of the best in the world. Why? Because Quebec's approach to childcare services is based on the social economy, which means that economic development goes hand in hand with social development. The Minister of Social Development himself has nothing but praise for our system.

Child care has five major functions.

First, it has an educational function by being a place where children acquire the knowledge and skills they need to develop and reach their potential, both physically and intellectually.

Second, it has a practical function, by ensuring that children whose parents work are cared for.

Third, it has a social and cultural function, by continuing to transmit values taught at home. Children develop their vision of the world, learn to socialize and function in a group.

Fourth, it has an economic function, because child care services provide thousands of people with a workplace where skills are recognized and where working conditions improve each year to ensure that job quality is maintained. It allows some parents to remain in the workforce, while others are able to continue their education or improve their job skills before returning to the work force. These measures contribute significantly to fighting poverty.

Fifth, it has a democratic and civic function, because everyone is admitted, without regard for gender, origin, religion or financial situation, which signifies a healthy environment in which children can develop. They benefit from a system where equal opportunity and justice for all is a daily reality. A policy for families including quality child care with a strong focus on all these functions allows many underprivileged children to get a better start in life.

That is why the Bloc Québécois supports the other provinces that want to have a child care system. Nevertheless, the Bloc Québécois cannot support the Conservative Party's motion, because Quebec already has the expertise, the network and the contacts to identify and meet the needs of its citizens. That is why we want a firm guarantee in the budget, which will be tabled on February 23, that Quebec will get its share of the \$5 billion, unconditionally, as soon as the funding is in place.

In conclusion, the Bloc Québécois members cannot approve of the Conservative motion, which would give money directly to the parents or of the conditions a national law would impose on us. Finally, we are against anything that could prevent achievement of the objective of receiving full compensation from the federal government for continuing the exceptional development of the network of child care services in Quebec.

• (1350)

[English]

**Mr. Tony Martin (Sault Ste. Marie, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I want to commend the member for her presentation, which was well delivered. I also want to let people know that she participated in a

### Supply

conference in Winnipeg a few months ago at which child care was discussed. In fact, the Quebec model was featured, and a previous Parti Québécois minister who was responsible for introducing the program spoke to it.

When Quebec introduced this, a definite decision was made to have a system in place, a national program so to speak. Also a decision was made not to go the route that the Conservatives are suggesting. Could the member elaborate on why that was done?

Also with respect to the Quebec model, for the first few years there was a moratorium on any for profit centres receiving government money. Would the member speak to that point also?

[Translation]

**Ms. Nicole Demers:** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Sault Ste. Marie for his question. Indeed, the child care services in Quebec were established and created a national consensus. We are very much aware that child development—egalitarian and healthy development—requires very consistent policy.

As we heard previously, it is very hard for parents to have to make choices when they do not have the money to buy everything. The rent must be paid, or milk must be bought or things bought for the babies. Therefore, we need consistent policy.

Quebec decided to establish a child care service because we wanted to give our children the best opportunity for a good start in life. We continue to think it is the right way.

We also put a moratorium on child care services that cost, because we thought it was the best way to ensure equal child care services for everyone. Otherwise, many inequalities arise and the children do not receive the same quality of care in child care services. It is important to maintain a standard of quality for development and growth, and for the services provided for our children.

• (1355)

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Nepean—Carleton, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I want to point out that the members from the Bloc Québécois are always interested in provincial jurisdictions, but they do not appear to see any importance in family jurisdictions. I think that is very interesting. They contradict themselves by taking this position.

[English]

It is clear that the Bloc would like to speak constantly about the jurisdiction of the provincial government, namely in Quebec, but never about the jurisdiction of families to make their own decisions. It is an enormous contradiction for that party to stand in the House and constantly speak about the need to take power out of this place and give it to another level of government, but never to take the power out of the hands of both governments and give it directly to the parents themselves.

Would the hon. member stand in the House and explain to us from which funding envelope the government is going to find the billions and billions of dollars that this new babysitting bureaucracy will cost?

*S. O. 31*

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Nicole Demers:** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for the question. I think that, basically, everyone in this House wants the best for our children and grandchildren. There may be some conjecture, of course, that we prefer to support the provincial policies. It is true, no one will take offence at that. We are known to be sovereignists. However, we pay taxes and are entitled to get the best in exchange for the taxes that we pay. We will therefore defend the citizens of Quebec, who have already established a system.

As I said a while ago, there is an MNA who wanted to be Premier of Quebec and tried to institute a system like the one that the Conservative Party would like to have now. The result was that he lost the elections and lost four seats. Quebec families do not want this, and I do not think that families in Canada want it either. There is a minority that can pay for services if it wants. But the others do not want it.

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I feel summoned to speak by the question from the hon. member of the Conservative Party. I would like to ask my colleague if she feels the same frustration as I do. I see how the government wants to make us suspect for wanting to have a daycare service, in Canada or Quebec, suspect in terms of the value judgment that is made, for example, on the quality of education that our mothers and our immediate families have provided and continue to provide for children.

I think they are putting their heads in the sand. It is not a value judgment on the perceived quality of education that is provided by parents. It is the choice that may be given to parents of having a real daycare system where children can be given equitable supervision and not of not offering a choice. Not offering a choice is what the motion of the Conservative Party is proposing to us today. I am outraged.

**Ms. Nicole Demers:** Madam Speaker, I am glad my colleague is outraged because I am as well.

I know that my mother got up very early every morning to raise her six children. She would go to work and come home at noon to make lunch because there were no child care services. Now she is 76 and she wishes she could have had such services. She knows full well that just because you have a good mother, a good grandmother or good neighbours does not mean your child will be well looked after.

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

### BLACK HISTORY MONTH

**Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Black History Month is a time of celebration for Canadians of African descent and it is a time to reflect on the significance of their history in Canada and the substantial economic and social contribution they continue to make to this day.

● (1400)

[*English*]

2005 will mark 50 years since Canada signed the first formal labour market agreement with the Caribbean. This marked the beginning of controlled immigration from non-white countries. This was a domestic scheme now known as the live-in caregiver program. Since then we have depended on teachers and other professionals to fill our labour needs.

Seventy per cent of our total labour force growth is now made up of immigrants. They come from the Caribbean and other parts of the African diaspora.

[*Translation*]

I congratulate therefore the 2,000 or so constituents of Laval—Les Îles of Black African descent as they celebrate their history. I also want to thank them for continuing to contribute to improving their adopted land, Canada.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

### JOHN ROBERT MCCAIG

**Mr. Jim Prentice (Calgary Centre-North, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on this the 40th anniversary of the Canadian flag, it is fitting that the House pay tribute to a distinguished Canadian.

John Robert “Bud” McCaig passed away on January 11. He will be sorely missed by his family, by fellow Calgarians and by his countrymen.

Bud McCaig was a member of the Order of Canada and was one of Calgary's most respected business leaders, philanthropists and citizens.

Over the course of his life, Bud McCaig built Trimac Corporation from a small regional trucking company into one of North America's largest transportation conglomerates.

Bud was a great family man and a great friend to many causes. He was a member of the board of governors at the University of Calgary. He was chairman emeritus at the Calgary Health Trust. He founded the Alberta Bone and Joint Institute with an extraordinarily generous donation. There are many other causes too numerous to mention.

Most important, Bud McCaig brought kindness, humility and compassion to everything and everyone he touched. Today we pay tribute to the flag and to one of our finest citizens who served it so well.

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### NATIONAL FLAG OF CANADA DAY

**Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today marks the 40th anniversary of the Canadian flag. It was first raised on Parliament Hill on February 15, 1965.

The debate in Parliament prior to the adoption of the maple leaf as our official national symbol is recorded as one of the most controversial of its time.

Much more than a symbol, the Canadian flag is now recognized worldwide and represents our values as a peaceful and generous country. National Flag of Canada Day is a day for us to reflect on our history, our identity and what unites all Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

The first National Flag of Canada Day was established in 1996 largely due to the efforts of a former member of the House. Jesse Flis represented the constituency of Parkdale—High Park for many years, and through his efforts we now celebrate National Flag of Canada Day every February 15.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### UNIVERSITÉ DE SHERBROOKE

**Ms. France Bonsant (Compton—Stanstead, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, 2004 marked the 50th anniversary of the Université de Sherbrooke. The closing event in its year of celebration was a video presentation on the role of women at this institution.

The 30-minute video was prepared by the affirmative action program in order to leave for posterity a valuable account of the significant contribution made by women to this institution.

In the video, 20 women describe the role they and other women have played in the development of the Université de Sherbrooke. In the past 50 years, these women have served as professors, directors, deans, union presidents, counsellors and assistants of numerous kinds.

The Université de Sherbrooke and the entire Eastern Townships owe these women a debt of gratitude for making this a top-ranking institution and an economic driver for the region.

\* \* \*

[English]

#### BRAMPTON CALL CENTRE

**Hon. Gurbax Malhi (Bramalea—Gore—Malton, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, earlier this month Brampton City Council announced the creation of an after hours customer service call centre.

This new centre will lead to improved customer service by enhancing the city's handling of bylaw and other complaints after hours.

Concerned about long constituent wait times on the phone, councillors found a way to rectify the situation. They will invest \$1.5 million and hire seven additional employees to staff the centre to be located on the third floor of the Civic Centre in Brampton.

Once again councillors in Bramalea, Gore and Castlemore have found an innovative proactive solution to a difficult problem. I proudly salute Brampton City Council on its efforts to improve after hours customer service in that rapidly expanding municipality.

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#### BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS OF CANADA

**Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring to the attention of the House the great work done by Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada. Big Brothers

*S. O. 31*

Big Sisters of Canada is a leading child and youth mentoring organization.

In St. Thomas and surrounding Elgin County the Big Brothers Big Sisters program, in operation for over 35 years, has expanded beyond the traditional matching to include couples matching, singles matching, and my favourite program, the Cops for Kids initiative. These unique programs have led to over 60 matches this year, nearly doubling last year's numbers.

I look forward to continuing to work with Big Brothers Big Sisters in my riding to ensure that every child in St. Thomas and surrounding Elgin County who needs a mentor has a mentor. I encourage Canadians from coast to coast to do the same. Canadians can make a difference.

\* \* \*

● (1405)

#### SKILLS FOR CHANGE

**Mr. Navdeep Bains (Mississauga—Brampton South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate an outstanding young man from my riding.

Eric Acuna, who works for Newark Paperboard Products, has been selected to receive the 2005 New Pioneers Graduate Award from the Skills for Change organization.

Skills for Change is a non-profit charitable organization that raises public awareness of the work of immigrants and refugees across Canada. It provides them with the employment focused programs that they need.

The Skills for Change organization was given recognition for its work in 2003 when it received the Citation for Citizenship Award from Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

The award that Eric will receive honours new Canadians for their hard work, determination and contribution to our communities. The award also celebrates Canada's diversity and the continuing multicultural growth of our country.

In recognition of Eric's work, I would like to once again take this opportunity to congratulate him on receiving this award.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### INTER-UNIVERSITY TRADE EXCHANGE SIMULATION COMPETITION

**Mr. Roger Clavet (Louis-Hébert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, on January 21 and 22, Laval University held the 17th Quebec and Ontario inter-university trade exchange simulation competition. This year, the organizers from Laval's finance and insurance student association innovated by adding a college category to the competition.

The students from the faculty of business administration at Laval University were the winners in the university category, while those from Collège François Xavier Garneau were the winners in the college category.

*S. O. 31*

My congratulations to them, as well as to the participants from the other universities and colleges and the organizers, who did a huge job in carrying out an instructional activity on one of the most visible feature of our financial system.

They have given us more reasons to be proud of the students from Louis-Hébert and the Quebec City area, who outdo themselves with every new opportunity.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

#### NATIONAL FLAG OF CANADA DAY

**Hon. Sarmite Bulte (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today is National Flag of Canada Day.

Forty years ago many of us were gathered in schoolyards around this time, proud witnesses to one of the great events in Canadian history. It was a cool day in many parts of the land and downright freezing cold in others. Yet there was a warmth in our hearts as we listened to a story unfold about a distinctive symbol, one that would soon become recognized and revered the world over.

In 1964 a Senate and House of Commons committee was formed. It called for submissions and received hundreds of designs and patterns. Hundreds of speeches were made in Parliament. Parliamentarians and other eminent Canadians had but one shared goal, to find a family symbol for the people of Canada that painted a portrait of justice, peace and equality for all humankind.

That goal has been reached. Whether we work to build our nation here at home or reach out to help a foreign nation in need, the flag of Canada waves a signal that harmony will prevail.

Let us look up to our flag with affection and pride. Its threads are woven tightly to create one seamless community from sea to sea to sea.

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#### NATIONAL FLAG OF CANADA DAY

**Mr. Gord Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, 40 years ago today the maple leaf flag was raised for the first time here on Parliament Hill and all across Canada. It is a cherished and welcome symbol for all Canadians and is a familiar and welcome sight around the world.

Today I recognize one of my predecessors, a former member of Parliament for Leeds, who was one of the strongest supporters of the flag. He played a key advisory role in its choice and recommendation by the flag committee.

John Ross Matheson wanted all Canadians to become consciously Canadian. The flag he helped create supports that wish, probably far beyond his imagination. In his book, *Canada's Flag*, he wrote:

May the maple leaf, our emblem dear, continue to fly for so long as the wind shall blow.

I join all Canadians in acknowledging Mr. Matheson's contribution to Canada.

#### BESLAN SCHOOLCHILDREN

**Mrs. Susan Kadis (Thornhill, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw the attention of the House to a special delegation that is visiting Parliament today.

Eighteen children held hostage in Beslan on that fateful first day of school are in Ottawa today seeing democracy firsthand and exploring our scenic capital. I am proud to host their visit to Parliament.

As innocent victims of terror, their plight touched the hearts of all Canadians. Today I would like to convey a message of solidarity with them, for Canada was aghast at the brutal targeting of kids in their school. While nothing can dispel the trauma of that terrible ordeal, I hope that this two week vacation in Canada will give back a dose of innocence and a carefree childhood to these remarkable kids.

I wish them all the very best in the future. I want to assure them that Canada stands strong with them in the fight against terrorism.

\* \* \*

● (1410)

#### NATIONAL DEFENCE

**Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, four times as many Canadians strongly oppose Canada's participation in the U.S. missile defence program as those who strongly support it. It is alarming to know that the Liberal government was poised to sign on to Bush's missile defence that would inevitably weaponize space and launch a new and dangerous global arms race.

While the Prime Minister is being coy with his position as he tries to avoid the scrutiny of the Canadian public and his own caucus, New Democrats are clear on where they stand. We want Canada to stay out of it. We want no part of G.W. Bush's ill thought out and unilateral policy agenda. We will continue to press this demand in Parliament and work with anti-war and peace groups to ensure Canada is an advocate for peace and human security.

The NDP has consistently supported and pressed for Canada to meet its international commitment that 0.7% of gross domestic product be dedicated to international development assistance. We call on the government to heed the priorities of Canadians: no to star wars and yes to human dignity.

\* \* \*

#### BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS OF CANADA

**Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in 1972 I was a co-founder of the Big Brothers of Dufferin, along with Bill Bissel, Bill Parke, Spencer Finch, Wes Prosser, Bill Roberts and Vera Rogers. Big Sisters was started in 1977 by Jim McCloskey and Dave Ferrier, along with board members Penny Smith and Mary Wells. Then in 1996 the two agencies were merged to form Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Dufferin & District.

As the leading youth mentoring organization in Canada, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada is committed to the healthy development of youth in our community by providing them with quality relationships and adult mentors. Those who volunteer their time as a big brother or sister are to be commended for the time they take from their personal lives.

This Saturday, February 19, I will be attending the 26th Annual Bowl for Kids in Orangeville. Last year \$37,000 was raised. This year over 100 participants have signed up so far and over 50 volunteers.

Sponsors for this year's Bowl for Kids are Kelsey's, Subway, the Banner, K&G Trophy, Mono Arts & Graphics, J.S.T. Printing and The New VR. Bowl for Kids is certain to be a big success.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### NICOLE LEROUX

**Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I take this opportunity to congratulate Nicole Leroux on winning the Governor General's Literary award in the youth category with her book entitled, *L'hiver de Léo Polatouche*.

It is with pride that I point out that Ms. Leroux was born in Saint-Georges-de-Windsor and raised in Danville, in my riding of Richmond—Arthabaska. For the past 25 years, she has been working as a psychoeducator with children in difficulty, while continuing to practise as a psychotherapist.

*L'hiver de Léo Polatouche* is her first novel for young people. The jury described her novel as a charming and poignant tale for readers of all ages, adding that the story accurately illustrates the value of each individual, regardless of their limitations.

Nicole Leroux does not plan to stop there. Having now been bitten by the bug, she is working on her first adult novel. I wish her the very best.

\* \* \*

[English]

#### NATIONAL FLAG OF CANADA DAY

**Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there are times in one's life or in the life of a nation when it seems like everything comes full circle. That is how I felt this morning during a flag day ceremony in my riding of Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry.

Forty years after the maple leaf flag came into being, I was honoured to watch Cornwall's own Gaetan Secours, the former RCMP officer who raised the first ceremonial maple leaf flag on Parliament Hill, repeat that ritual for a local audience.

The first maple leaf flag to fly over the Peace Tower is being returned to Ottawa by the family of the late Lucien Lamoureux, the member for Stormont—Dundas and deputy speaker during the flag debate. Just like 40 years ago, Canada now has a minority government, which means vigorous debate and real compromise, just as we saw in the debate over the new flag. Canada was built on that kind of debate and compromise.

S. O. 31

As we recall the birth of our nation's most important symbol, I urge all Canadians to recall and relive the spirit of rejuvenation that gripped this nation 40 years ago. Together we can forge our own destiny.

\* \* \*

• (1415)

[Translation]

#### MARRIAGE

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to offer some advice on the Conservatives' new gag law, their policy of vetting same sex marriage speeches through their leader's office.

So here, Mr. Speaker, are the top five lines—actual quotes from his recent interview with ethnic media—that should be deleted from the member for Calgary Southeast's forthcoming speech on same sex marriage.

Number 5: “Look, equality does not mean treating everybody exactly the same”.

Number 4: “We are against unjust discrimination. But there are forms of just discrimination”.

Number 3: “Marriage is open to everybody as long as they are a man and a woman”.

Number 2: “Personally, I am not against a referendum... Most democracies in the world, when they seek to amend their constitution, do so through a referendum process”.

And the Number 1 line to eliminate from a member's same sex speech: “I am a bachelor, so I do not know anything about marriage anyway either way”.

Well, at least that last quote by the member for Calgary Southeast is something that everyone in this House can agree on!

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#### AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT

**The Speaker:** I have the honour to lay upon the table the first report of the Auditor General of Canada for the year 2005.

[English]

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(g), this document is deemed to have been permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

*Oral Questions***ORAL QUESTION PERIOD***[English]***AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT**

**Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General's report you just tabled indicates the government has learned nothing from the sponsorship scandal. That scandal happened because the Liberals stashed millions away from the watch of Parliament. Now, even after repeated warnings, billions of dollars continue to be hidden away in these unaccountable foundations.

When will the government learn and put foundation spending under the scrutiny of Parliament and the Auditor General?

**Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the foundations are available to Parliament. The Canadian Foundation for Innovation, as an example, has appeared over 11 times in front of parliamentary committees.

The fundamental point the hon. member seems to be raising is he is questioning the validity of the Canadian Foundation for Innovation and other such foundations.

The Leader of the Opposition should go to the universities and the teaching hospitals in the country and ask them what they think about the Canadian Foundation for Innovation. He will find that they support it. They are supporting fundamental research in the country, and that is what is important.

**Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am only quoting the Auditor General who says today, "Given the significant sums involved, I am concerned about the lack of adequate accountability to Parliament". It is for \$8 billion.

The Prime Minister has just finished appearing before the Gomery commission where he could not remember anything about finance in the last 10 years.

Will the Prime Minister promise the House that this time he will ensure in the upcoming budget that more taxpayer money is not hidden away in foundations?

**Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, no money is hidden. Public reports are made. All the hon. member has to do is read them.

If the hon. member would like to call the members of any one of those foundations in front of a committee, he is certainly free to do so. In fact, I can tell the hon. member that those foundations would like to appear.

If the hon. member is challenging what the foundations do, saying that the money is hidden, then why does he not go to the hospitals, go to the universities and go to those who benefit from what those foundations do and say that to them?

\* \* \*

**CHILD CARE**

**Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if the Prime Minister is so sure of his position, why does he not go to the Auditor General and say it to her?

*[Translation]*

On another subject, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Alberta and Quebec all expressed reservations about the child care project, because it does not respect provincial jurisdictions.

Will the government allow the provinces to opt out of a federal program with full financial compensation?

*[English]*

**Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, if I may in the time available to me, I will respond to the preamble to the hon. member's question. He wonders if I am prepared to say what I have said in front of the Auditor General. I assure the hon. member I am prepared to say it in front of the Auditor General.

In fact, I would suggest to the hon. member that he might want to look around him and smell the roses.

• (1420)

**Ms. Rona Ambrose (Edmonton—Spruce Grove, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, almost 100% of young working moms and dads in Canada have said that if they could afford it, they would stay home part time to care for their own children. Today in the House the Minister of Social Development said that young working moms only say that because they feel guilty.

Instead of offending working women, why will the minister not listen to what young working moms are asking for? How dare this minister ignore their desire for choice.

**Hon. Ken Dryden (Minister of Social Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, just because the hon. member mischaracterizes and misstates, does not make it so. I was speaking of polling numbers. What polls allow us to do is to say yes to a number of different, often contradictory things. As parents, we all want to spend more time with our kids. For reasons such as economic, social and independence, we do not.

By far the most persuasive polling data we have is, after working through all the choices, that the great majority of parents with kids are both in the workplace.

**Ms. Rona Ambrose (Edmonton—Spruce Grove, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we fought long and hard for the right to vote, the right to participate in universities and the workforce, and the right to make our own choices. Working women want to make their own choices. We do not need old white guys telling us what to do.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. member for Edmonton—Spruce Grove has the floor. We will hear the remainder of the question.

**Ms. Rona Ambrose:** Mr. Speaker, my question for the minister is clear. Why is this minister so opposed to providing choices for working women?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Ken Dryden (Minister of Social Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned before, just because the hon. member misstates and mischaracterizes does not make it so. Real choice is the opportunity for men and women across the country, for women across the country, to have the choice of high quality early learning and child care.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, because of the Liberal government's massive cuts and broken promises, 55% of workers are still not eligible for employment insurance when they are out of work. This situation has lasted long enough, so long in fact that, in committee, after initially objecting to these recommendations, even the Liberals supported the improvements proposed by the Bloc Québécois. This is a step forward, but now we must go through the budget stage.

If the government wants to improve the fate of workers, will it pledge to take into consideration, in its budget, the report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills Development, Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities?

• (1425)

**Hon. Lucienne Robillard (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we will certainly review with interest all the recommendations made by the parliamentary committee on human resources development. We hope to be in a position to do so in the timeframe provided by the rules of the House.

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, clearly stated, this means that we will wait another six months, after two general elections and promises broken one after the other. Enough is enough. The solutions are known, and the government has the means to respond favourably to the recommendations of the Standing Committee on Human Resources which, as I said, were supported by Liberal members.

Since the workers who have suffered a prejudice because of this government have already been waiting too long, will the Prime Minister assure us that the employment insurance program will be with the budget, in compliance with the committee's report? For the Prime Minister, who talked about the democratic deficit, the time has come to prove that he meant what he said.

**Hon. Lucienne Robillard (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister was very clear on this point. So was the government in the Speech from the Throne. Indeed, we stated that we would review the employment insurance program and make the necessary adjustments to meet the needs of employers and workers. Therefore, it is with great interest that I will examine all the recommendations made by members of this House.

**Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, when one looks at the progress that has been made, it is not as clear. There would be fewer problems with the employment insurance program if the fund were self-directed by the employers and

workers. That principle was recognized in the throne speech, as well as in today's committee report, so the government cannot back down any longer.

Does the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development intend to insist that her colleague in Finance create an independent EI fund to put an end to the federal government's pillaging of contributions?

[English]

**Hon. John McKay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, certainly included in the report that the hon. member references were a number of suggestions, including that espoused by the hon. member, and certainly that is being taken into consideration as the finance minister prepares his budget.

[Translation]

**Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, these are not suggestions, but recommendations.

Various labour organizations, including the Conseil du patronat, are calling for the creation of an independent EI fund, yet the minister is still shilly-shallying. Employment insurance has become an employment tax, and this is unacceptable.

So, does the minister intend to get her act together and support the creation of an independent employment insurance fund, as recommended unanimously to her by the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development, Skills Development, Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities?

[English]

**Hon. John McKay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I can give the hon. member assurance that the report of that particular committee has been in front of the finance minister. The rate setting mechanisms and the independence of the commission have been before the finance minister and they are in fact being given due consideration.

\* \* \*

**THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Hon. Bill Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, tomorrow the Kyoto accord comes into effect and I hope that some day we might look back on that day as the day we began to actually save the planet, but it seems to me the most appropriate thing that the Prime Minister could do tomorrow would be to apologize to Canadians for a decade or more of inaction.

The Prime Minister promised in the red book to reduce emissions by 20%. Instead they are up by 20%. Could the Prime Minister tell us why he did not meet these targets, why these promises were broken, and why emissions never went down under a Liberal government?

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of the Environment, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in 2002 we came up with a plan that will give results. The plan has come up with some measures that will take some years before we see the greenhouse gas emissions decreasing, but that is not enough. We need a stronger plan and this plan will be released pretty soon.

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Bill Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, so far we have not seen a plan, and in 1993 the Liberals promised to do something about it then, not starting in 2005.

I was here when the Prime Minister was the environment critic for the Liberal Party, when he criticized Brian Mulroney for wanting to freeze emissions, and yet under 11 years of Liberal government they went up by 20%.

Could the Prime Minister tell us when we are going to have a plan and when is he going to apologize for contributing to the destruction of the planet the way he has?

• (1430)

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of the Environment, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister and the government will certainly not apologize for the fact that we have kept the situation of our government and Canada in such a way that now we have surpluses which we will wisely invest in order to improve the environmental policy of Canada. The difference between us and the NDP is not that they care or we care about the environment. Both parties care. The difference is that they do not have any strategy to keep the fiscal house in order for Canada.

\* \* \*

**JUSTICE**

**Mr. Peter MacKay (Central Nova, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Toronto Police Chief Julian Fantino said on the weekend that hard-core, gun-crazed gangsters were perpetrating a frenzy of violence and bloodshed in Toronto on the weekend. When the smoke cleared, two were dead and six were injured. Seventeen of these 18 crimes involved guns.

Alarming, Chief Fantino made a damning assessment that criminals have no fear of the justice system and that it neither deters nor rehabilitates. He and many others are calling on the government to take action to crack down and restore safety on the streets. When will the government legislate mandatory minimum sentences for the criminal use of firearms and end this ineffective gun registry, putting the money into front line policing?

**Hon. Irwin Cotler (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we care no less than the opposition about the safety and security of Canadians. We made safety and security a centrepiece of our meetings with federal, provincial and territorial ministers of justice and we will continue to promote and protect the security and safety of Canadians.

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[Translation]

**PUBLIC SECURITY**

**Mr. Peter MacKay (Central Nova, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the CBC is again reporting that the Liberals are not taking terrorist threats seriously. Our borders are like sieves, and our major dams are open to attack at any time. The Liberals are cutting back on the number of RCMP in Quebec and ignoring all the alarm signals.

The minister needs to wake up. She needs to tell us what steps she plans to take, without further delay, to protect Canadians.

[English]

**Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I have said before in this House, the redeployment of RCMP officers in Quebec is not reducing the complement in that province. In fact, what the force is doing is redeploying those officers to ensure they can provide better border protection; for example, through the creation of more integrated border enforcement teams. In fact, we are redeploying officers so they can work more effectively with the Sûreté du Québec in the fight against organized crime, drug trafficking, gun smuggling, people smuggling and so on.

We are redeploying to be more effective and more efficient in protecting the people of Quebec and Canada.

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**CHILD CARE**

**Ms. Helena Guergis (Simcoe—Grey, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the social development minister has said that parents wishing to raise their own children at home are “out of date”, that children should be put into institutionalized care instead. Will the minister admit that he is the one who is out of date and understand that women deserve and want choice?

**Hon. Ken Dryden (Minister of Social Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I have said in this House before, and as I said in the House earlier this morning, at the very centre of any development of any child is the parent-child relationship. That is at the very centre.

What early learning and child care is, is an option. It is an extra choice for those parents to put their children into an experience with other children where in fact they have a better opportunity of growing up with that variety of—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Simcoe—Grey.

**Ms. Helena Guergis (Simcoe—Grey, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, working moms would prefer to help raise their own kids. However, the minister says that at home parental care is mediocre. He said that kids raised in their own homes do not have a rich experience. How dare the minister say that parents raising their own children constitutes mediocre care? Will this minister apologize to working women for his demeaning comments?

**Hon. Ken Dryden (Minister of Social Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Speaker:** Order. I am quite prepared to suspend the sitting until we get some order. The minister is rising to respond to this question. The question was asked. He is entitled to give a response. We will have order.

• (1435)

**Hon. Ken Dryden:** Mr. Speaker, what I find stunning is the fact that it seems as if the party opposite feels that if it repeats a misstatement or if it repeats a mischaracterization often enough, it will make it so. Clearly it is not so. It never was so. It will not be so.



*Oral Questions*

[Translation]

**THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of the Environment keeps repeating to anyone who will listen that he is in favour of signing a bilateral agreement with Quebec to implement the Kyoto protocol.

Can the minister give us a report on the state of negotiations with Quebec, since the time repeats that he wants an agreement?

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of the Environment, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, negotiations with the Government of Quebec are going very well. The last thing I would want to do is choose the hon. member from the Bloc to be a stakeholder in these discussions.

**Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, if there is an agreement with Quebec, the Minister of the Environment must take into account the enormous effort Quebec has already made in connection with the greenhouse gases.

Will the minister commit to signing a specific agreement on a territorial approach, which would enable Quebec to manage its own implementation of the Kyoto protocol on its own territory and would finally recognize the efforts made by Quebec in the past?

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of the Environment, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, each one of us will do his part, and we will sign agreements with each province in order to ensure that each province's specific situation is taken into account.

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**FOUNDATIONS**

**Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Repentigny, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, once again, the Auditor General is condemning transfer payments to foundations. She believes that these foundations are being used to hide federal surpluses and that Parliament is losing control over funds transferred to them.

Given the numerous scandals that have tarnished the current government and given that most of these foundations were established by the Liberal government, will the President of the Treasury Board agree that, at the very least, there is only one thing to do, and that is to designate the Office of the Auditor General as the external auditor of these foundations?

[English]

**Hon. Reg Alcock (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Auditor General for her report, as I have done each time she has laid down her report.

I would like to maybe add to the member's information about what the Auditor General has actually said about foundations. She said that a number of improvements had been made to the framework for the accountability in foundations to Parliament; that the government was committed to better reporting of the foundation; that we found more information each year on foundations than the estimates documents of all the sponsoring departments; that 10 of 11 funding agreements between sponsoring departments and foundations had provisions for independent evaluations; and that the annual report of the foundations included audited financial statements prepared in accordance with general accounting—

I think we are doing it.

[Translation]

**Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Repentigny, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the President of the Treasury Board should have read, too, the excerpt in which the Auditor General asks for the right of oversight of these foundations.

The Treasury Board continues to turn a deaf ear to repeated requests by the Auditor General and parliamentarians demanding better accountability by foundations.

Does the government not realize that it is possible to increase financial controls while maintaining the operational autonomy of these foundations?

[English]

**Hon. Reg Alcock (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I hope the member is not suggesting that there is a problem with the way the foundations are spending their money. Certainly they are accounting for it in all possible manners and are quite willing to have evaluations. All the foundations in our sample have provisions for a financial statement and a report by an external auditor. Some foundations have included significant evaluation findings in their annual reports.

There is a dispute about whether or not the government should be directing the allocation of research funding. We prefer to use an independent peer review and I think the government continues to be of that view.

**Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, \$7.7 billion still sits in foundation bank accounts. In her report today, speaking of foundations, the Auditor General said, "Given the significant sums involved, I am concerned about the lack of adequate accountability to Parliament". I have to say that I would take the Auditor General's word on this over the Prime Minister's word any day.

In the shadow of sponsorship, what possible excuse could the government have for not having adequate parliamentary oversight of the billions of dollars sitting in foundations?

● (1440)

**Hon. Reg Alcock (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, if the member would like to take the Auditor General's words, let me give him a few.

The government is committed to better reporting in foundations' corporate plans and summaries and their annual reports, and in the Estimates reports of sponsoring departments.

She went on to say that a number of improvements had been made to the framework for the accountability of foundations. In fact, the new Comptroller General is working closely with the Auditor General. Significant improvements have been made. I would invite any committee in the House to call any one of the foundations before it if it has concerns. However if they are suggesting that the foundations are mismanaging or illegally managing funds, they should say so.

*Oral Questions*

**Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my esteem for the member would rise tremendously if he would acknowledge what the Auditor General said today, that there was no ministerial oversight and no performance audits. This is just like an absolute mirror of what has gone on in sponsorship. The only thing missing is the paper shredder on the desk.

Why does the government continue to defend these practices when the Auditor General said, "Transferring funds to these foundations continues to place public money beyond the reach of effective parliamentary scrutiny?" What is the problem over there?

**Hon. Reg Alcock (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there are two separate issues.

The first issue is the government's policy decision to put some amounts into foundations so they could be delivered, not by politicians, but by peer review to research institutions. As the Prime Minister has pointed out, if members talk to the university presidents across this country they will find huge support for this foundation.

On the issue of reporting, they all have audited financial statements. They appear before House committees when asked. They are subjecting themselves to evaluations. There is a dispute about how this gets done. We are working with the Auditor General and we will get to a conclusion.

**Mr. John Williams (Edmonton—St. Albert, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, crown corporations have 73,000 employees, manage \$78 billion in assets and consumed \$5 billion of taxpayer money last year, and the Auditor General pointed out today that four of the largest crown corporations have no chairs or chief executive officers. Governance is a mess at the crown corporations because nobody is minding the store.

If we are spending \$5 billion on crown corporations and there is no management, how can we be sure there is not another sponsorship scandal out there?

**Hon. Reg Alcock (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I know the member has a deep interest in this topic and we have talked about it many times.

I want to inform him and other members of the House that at 10 o'clock on Thursday morning I will be tabling the government's report in response to the Auditor General's concern, the result of nearly a year's work looking at how we modernize the accountability regime for crown corporations.

**Mr. John Williams (Edmonton—St. Albert, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is not reports we want, it is action.

It is interesting to note that Canada Post, VIA Rail and the Business Development Bank have been waiting for months for new chief executive officers. Hon. members may recall that those CEOs left under one mighty big cloud because of the sponsorship scandal.

How much more money has to be wasted, how many more scandals have there to be and how much more Liberal incompetence do we have to tolerate before the government hires good people to do the big jobs?

**Hon. Reg Alcock (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in the foreword to the Auditor General's report members will see that she comments on the fact that there have been enormous problems in the management of large, publicly traded institutions. A lot of changes have taken place in the Ontario Securities Commission and in the U.S. Sarbanes-Oxley. We decided to take a look at all of that so we could provide the most modern, up to date, comprehensive review of the governance of crown corporations in 20 years. I will be tabling that at 10 o'clock on Thursday morning.

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**MARRIAGE**

**Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I understand the official opposition is now vetting speeches on civil marriages out of fear of what their members might say.

In light of this, could the hon. leader of the government in the House assure the chamber that the issue of civil marriages will receive full and open debate, even if the Conservative members are not allowed to take advantage of this opportunity?

• (1445)

**Hon. Tony Valeri (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, with respect to the civil marriage bill, our members will speak to their convictions in a free and unfettered way.

For members across the floor, the issue should not be about hiding behind ineffectual leadership, it should be about standing up for the fundamental rights and freedoms of Canadians.

It is a contradiction in terms to say that the Conservatives will allow a free vote when they will not allow for free speech.

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**AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT**

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General made it crystal clear in her report today that the government is hiding from the Auditor General unaccountable foundation money.

Eleven recommendations were made by her and seven were rejected by the government. So much for working with Sheila.

We have seen the sponsorship scandal. Instead of allowing the Auditor General to protect Canadians in all areas of federal funding, the government is stonewalling.

Will the Prime Minister commit today to end the flim-flam and make these foundations fully accountable to the Auditor General, to Parliament and to the Canadian people?

**Hon. Reg Alcock (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let me quote again:

...we cannot state unequivocally that the government's method of accounting for foundations contravenes the accounting standards established by the Public Sector Accounting Board (PSAB) of the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants.

In other words, the foundations are accounting exactly as they should be.

*Oral Questions*

The report went on to say that provisions for corporate plans and annual reports have improved, that most foundations provided information on how much money was spent and how many projects were funded. It also stated, "We found more information each year on foundations in the estimates documents of the sponsoring departments".

The Auditor General had a great deal to say about this.

\* \* \*

**MILLENNIUM SCHOLARSHIP FOUNDATION**

**Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government insists foundations are doing well, but for students forced to incur record high education debt, the roof is caving in. What is the government's response? Its response is to build the bank account of the Millennium Scholarship Foundation.

Accrued interest from this foundation alone would pay 200,000 students' tuition for a full year, according to the Auditor General's figures.

Will the government finally redirect millennium scholarship foundation dollars to needs based funding for students?

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Lucienne Robillard (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, to date, the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation has helped hundreds and hundreds of students in Canada. Each year, improvements are made to better assist students. It is quite obvious that we will carefully consider the Auditor General's recommendations and that staff at the foundation will follow up on them.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

**THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the government's attempt to comply with Kyoto will hurt Canadian families. They will pay more for electricity, for transportation and for heat.

In a report released today by the Canadian Taxpayers Federation it states that for every household it will cost about \$3,000 extra each year.

Will the minister stand today and tell Canadians exactly what Kyoto will cost them?

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of the Environment, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in industry it is the same as in politics. In politics we have the slow movers, always late for the industrial revolution, and we have the government that knows that to put the environment and the economy together is the way to go.

We have our champions in the industry who are saying the same thing. I want to quote Eric Lloyd from Petroleum Technology Alliance of Canada who said that Kyoto was not a hardship but an economic opportunity.

**Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the chamber of commerce said that Canadian businesses would not be

able to compete. Canadian manufacturers say we are going to lose thousands of jobs.

Today the Canadian Taxpayers Federation said that every family will be charged \$3,000 more a year because of Kyoto compliance.

Will the minister stop dodging the questions and tell Canadians exactly what it is going to cost them in their family incomes?

● (1450)

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of the Environment, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is true that we will have to invest in let say CO<sub>2</sub> sequestration. Yes, we will have to invest public money in it, but imagine that Canada will invent the best way to have CO<sub>2</sub> sequestration and that we will be able to send it everywhere in the world.

We will decrease megatonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> and we will make megatonnes of money with it.

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**CANADIAN FORCES**

**Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Oxford, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, for days now we have heard cries for help from the newly installed Chief of Defence Staff and his colleagues.

Nearly 300 of our Canadian Forces reservists from Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island who take part in South Bound Trooper, an annual training exercise at Fort Pickett, Virginia, have been left to rent a charter flight in order to get there.

It appears that the Canadian Forces cries for help are still falling on deaf ears.

Could the minister assure the House that this will not be the practice of the future for transporting our troops?

**Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in the transport of troops to a given location at any one time we always find the best way to do it. This was the most efficient way to achieve it in that particular circumstances.

We are always able to do that. We always look for the best way to achieve this type of situation and that was what we did in that circumstance.

**Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Oxford, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, not only did our reservists have to take a charter flight, they also had to ask Uncle Sam if he could send a plane to Halifax to transport their exercise equipment.

Canadian Forces stated that they simply do not have the air lift capability, echoes of the chief of our air force who appeared before the Senate defence committee and revealed that our air force was stretched beyond its capability.

Can anyone imagine an army that flies charter and asks friends to transport their weapons? Will the minister commit today to the purchase of air lift for our forces and end this embarrassment?

**Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, what the government is committed to is bringing forward a defence review that will allow the House and Canadians to judge the best investments we can make for our military.

*Oral Questions*

I will not commit today to the purchase of any one asset. What the government has made clear and what the Prime Minister has regularly emphasized is that we will have the best equipment and the best trained troops to do the job that we have to do both in Canada and around the world. They are doing it now and in the future they will be able to do it better thanks to the efforts of the government.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**GAS TAX**

**Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the head of the Fédération québécoise des municipalités had some pretty harsh things to say about the federal government's attitude as far as the transfer of part of the gas tax to the municipalities is concerned. To quote him, "We are in a better position than the feds to assess our own needs. It is up to us, with Quebec, to decide what will be funded, not Ottawa."

Does the Minister of State responsible for Infrastructure and Communities intend to respect the opinion of the FQM president and therefore leave it up to Quebec and the municipal sector to decide what use will be made of the gas tax money?

**Hon. John Godfrey (Minister of State (Infrastructure and Communities), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have a long history of close collaboration with the Government of Quebec and the Quebec municipalities in seeking shared objectives. We will continue that approach, while respecting provincial jurisdiction.

**Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the head of the Fédération québécoise des municipalités, representing 900 Quebec municipalities, finds it obscene that the federal government is talking about a limited margin of manoeuvrability, whereas a surplus in excess of \$10 billion is expected for next year.

Does the minister not think Quebec and the municipalities have been squeezed long enough? What is he waiting for to transfer part of the gas tax to Quebec, as promised, with no strings attached.

**Hon. John Godfrey (Minister of State (Infrastructure and Communities), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have made a commitment to the municipalities for a total of \$5 billion over five years, with the amount in the fifth year being \$2 billion. As for the first four years, this will be revealed in the budget. I can, however, give you a guarantee at this time that there will be some serious amounts for the municipalities of Quebec and Canada in the coming budget.

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[English]

**AIRPORTS**

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Niagara Falls, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there is a report from Transport Canada indicating that the government thinks it needs a private air terminal for cabinet ministers to keep them comfortable and isolated from the public. Besides keeping them isolated, the new terminal would also provide "a drop-off point for catering or flowers". Is that not a beautiful thing?

How bad is it that ministers cannot mix with ordinary Canadians? Would the minister not be better off scrapping this idea and telling

his colleagues that if they do not want to talk to ordinary Canadians, they should lock themselves in their offices until the next election?

• (1455)

[Translation]

**Hon. Jean Lapierre (Minister of Transport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member was once a Conservative minister and this is exactly the same standard of treatment as in his time. We are talking about \$160,000 over three years. We are a long way from a private terminal. We are a long way from deluxe facilities. We simply want to have the same kind of facilities as in commercial aviation in general.

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**PUBLIC SAFETY**

**Mr. Jim Prentice (Calgary Centre-North, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it appears that democratic elections can be held in Iraq but not in Kanesatake. The climate of violence in this part of Quebec is such that the protection of citizens cannot be guaranteed. The Liberals meddle in sectors under provincial jurisdiction, but abdicate their responsibilities when courage is needed.

When will the minister take charge and guarantee citizens a minimum level of safety?

[English]

**Hon. Andy Scott (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, obviously the hon. member does not realize that security in the province of Quebec is in the hands of the province of Quebec and the Sûreté.

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**THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Mr. Russ Powers (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Kyoto protocol will take effect tomorrow. Can the Minister of the Environment advise the House why participation in the agreement will provide a major commercial benefit for Canada?

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of the Environment, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is a very good opportunity to organize our technology, to better conserve our energy, to decrease costly waste, to boost renewable energy in all sectors, to boost environmental technologies and services, to conquer new markets in emerging economies, to be the champion of sustainable economy, and to do our share for climate change.

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**EQUALIZATION PROGRAM**

**Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick (Prince Albert, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Conference Board of Canada says by all objective standards Saskatchewan is anything but a have province. The Conference Board also says that the clawback of non-renewable resources is most unfair and detrimental to the interests of Saskatchewan.

*Oral Questions*

Why will the finance minister not extend the Newfoundland and Labrador-Nova Scotia agreement and the principle of that agreement to other provinces like Saskatchewan?

**Hon. John McKay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan has recently been the beneficiary of increased revenues and has graduated in status to a have province. We on this side of the House congratulate Saskatchewan for doing that.

With respect to the converse of the question, I do not think that Saskatchewan enjoys a 63% debt to GDP ratio like Newfoundland and Labrador. I do not think it enjoys a 14.5% unemployment rate like Newfoundland and Labrador. In this Confederation, we do try to make accommodations to special—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Prince Albert.

**Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick (Prince Albert, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, with answers like this, is it any wonder that whooping cranes are becoming more common in Saskatchewan than federal Liberals?

Saskatchewan's per capita income is \$5,000 below the national average. Saskatchewan has the longest surgical wait list in the country. Saskatchewan has the second highest out-migration of citizens in the country and farmers in Saskatchewan are facing some very serious challenges.

What does the government have against the province of Saskatchewan?

**Hon. John McKay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I cannot speak to the out-migration. Possibly it has to do with the election of certain members of Parliament.

Saskatchewan has been the beneficiary of increased oil revenues. That has in fact resulted in very good fortune. In the last fiscal year, Saskatchewan was the beneficiary of \$710 million in adjustment money as delivered by the Minister of Finance. It is a beneficiary of the synchrotron program as delivered by the Minister of Finance. Saskatchewan has done very well under this government.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Bernard Cleary (Louis-Saint-Laurent, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the federal government promised \$5 million to the Native Women's Association of Canada for the Sisters in Spirit campaign. Now we learn that Ottawa has informed the organization that the announcement will be delayed.

Can the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development explain to the House why the announcement of the \$5 million grant has been delayed and can he tell us if he still intends to give this amount to the Native Women's Association of Canada?

• (1500)

**Hon. Liza Frulla (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Minister responsible for Status of Women, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada recognizes that an overall plan of action is needed in order to address violence against native women. We are involved in the Sisters in Spirit program and we shall be announcing it as soon as possible.

[*English*]

**INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

**Mr. Ken Boshcoff (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the United States of America is by far our largest trading partner. Nearly \$1.8 billion in two-way trade across Canada crosses the Canada-U.S. border everyday. About 86% of our exports to the U.S. and 96% of our trade is dispute free, but trade irritants from softwood lumber to the Byrd amendment continue to dominate the headlines.

What will the minister do to ease these irritants and improve our trade relations with the United States?

**Hon. Jim Peterson (Minister of International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the U.S. trade relationship is critical to our prosperity. We have opened seven new consulates and we have created the Washington advocacy secretariat. Yesterday, I met in Washington with the new secretary of commerce and I look forward to working with him to resolve our trade disputes, promote North American competitiveness and foster global trade liberalization.

On March 1 I will be leading a Canadian advocacy day in Washington, along with the Canada-U.S. parliamentary group who will meet with our American counterparts. I want members from all parties to attend. We welcome the help of all members with this most important of our relationships.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**AEROSPACE INDUSTRY**

**Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, on the weekend, Robert Brown, the head of CAE in Montreal, was lamenting the fact that despite his approaches to the federal government before Christmas, it still has not made its aerospace policy known.

Does the Minister of Finance intend to use the budget next Wednesday to finally announce an aerospace policy, as the federal industry minister has been promising for months?

[*English*]

**Hon. David Emerson (Minister of Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we continue to work with the industry and provincial governments. We will have an aerospace strategy announcement in the next few months.

*Supply***PRIVILEGE**

## PRINTING AND FRANKING PRIVILEGES—SPEAKER'S RULING

**The Speaker:** I am now prepared to rule on the question of privilege raised on Tuesday, February 1 by the hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton concerning the authorization required for printing and franking.

In presenting his case the hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton charged that during the Christmas adjournment a 10 percenter was sent to residents in the member's riding without either the member's authorization or that of the person in his office to whom he had delegated his authority pursuant to the provisions of section 12 of the Board of Internal Economy bylaw 301.

• (1505)

[*Translation*]

Further, the member alleged that contrary to the provisions of section 35 of the Canada Post Corporation Act these 10-percenters had been mailed using the member's franking privileges without his authorization.

[*English*]

The hon. chief government whip then intervened to explain that she had had the opportunity to look into the methodology used in obtaining the delegated authority referred to by the hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton. She went on to say that she agreed that the methodology had been flawed and apologized to the hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton for the error.

I would like to thank the hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton for raising this matter and the hon. chief government whip for her forthright explanation and apology.

As your Speaker, I am concerned, as was the hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton, that printing and franking activities that were not authorized by the member could be undertaken on his behalf. That said, since the hon. chief government whip has acknowledged the error and graciously apologized, I believe that this particular file has been resolved.

It remains only for me to assure the House that I have instructed my officials that in the annual disclosure of MP expenditures, any expenditures related to the production of this 10 percenter not be attributed to the hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton.

Both the hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton and the Chair have received assurances that this error will not happen again. I therefore consider the matter settled and find no prima facie breach of privilege.

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**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[*Translation*]

**SUPPLY**

## OPPOSITION MOTION—CHILD CARE FUNDING

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

**Mr. Christian Simard (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me today to debate this opposition motion, although the Bloc Québécois will vote against it.

The Conservative motion reads as follows:

That the House call upon the government to address the issue of childcare by fulfilling its commitment to reduce taxes for low and modest income families in the upcoming budget, and, so as to respect provincial jurisdiction, ensure additional funds for childcare are provided directly to parents.

I want to draw attention to the words “address the issue of child care”. I also note a very strong contradiction, in form and substance, in the reference to respecting provincial jurisdiction by transferring funds directly to parents.

Although we will vote against the motion by the Conservatives, this is an opportunity for us to debate the federal government's intention to intervene in the area of childcare, which reflects inefficiency, bad management and investments in areas outside its jurisdiction.

The Minister of Social Development, who was once a famous goalie, now seems to be tending goal for a centralizing and ineffective federalism which is preventing the provinces and Quebec from scoring for parents and families in Quebec. Yet, his child care system could benefit from better funding if the money was transferred directly to Quebec from this government's obscene annual surplus.

We will soon be struggling with a poorly designed and underfunded program that will not meet the needs of Canadians or Quebecers, if Quebec does not receive an immediate transfer payment with full financial compensation. Since 1998, successive Quebec governments have invested significantly in children so as to create a child care system that helps parents, who benefit from support by competent workers whose salaries continue to rise, and that helps families improve their situation and also fights poverty.

We are proposing a pan-Canadian program in an exclusively provincial jurisdiction. Once again, instead of “Ottawa knows best”, we will see that “Ottawa knows nothing at all”. It knows nothing, but will manage a program as it manages its foundations, the famous foundations where, the Auditor General just told us, \$7 billion is sitting, money for which the federal government is not accountable and about which it has no knowledge.

Once again, there will be investment in a child care program that will be costly but inefficient, as well as centrally administered, but with no guarantee, despite what the ministers have been saying one after another outside this House. We are told that 18 questions have been asked here in the House about the child care program. I think that we are now at over 20, with the ones from my colleague from Québec today. Yet there has never been a statement in this House that, yes, the day after the announcement of a federal child care program, even a poorly put-together one, for other Canadians, an agreement would immediately follow to provide Quebec with the funds it has unfortunately had to take from elsewhere. In so doing, Quebec no doubt has had to deprive students of text books and to make cuts to the health system, which is not as good as we would like it to be.

Quebec has had to make some hard choices in order to create its comprehensive and efficient child care system. When it is all in place, in 2006, it is going to cost \$1.7 billion. Unfortunately, while Quebec could obtain compensation totalling \$1.25 billion over five years, the feds are hemming and hawing indecisively, and it is the old who knows best, who can trample over others' jurisdictions the best.

As a result, we end up with a Canada that is less and less efficient, one that is built on ideologies, not on serving the people. This government is engaged in unhealthy competition with the provinces, arrogantly building itself up and thereby building up public cynicism toward federal Liberal MPs. I hope that the cynicism will stop there. This is an unfortunate situation.

● (1510)

I am a new member of Parliament. I may be a little naive. I thought governments existed to serve the people. I admit we have seen this type of shilly-shallying over the parental leave issue and over employment insurance. In fact, we just received the unanimous—or nearly unanimous—recommendation by a standing committee and the minister said it was not a recommendation, but a suggestion. Some ministers promised—and even the Prime Minister promised on television—that Quebec would definitively receive money for the child care program unconditionally. Now we see that in reality, the minister is waffling. He is the goalie, keeping Quebec from scoring.

I think the whole idea behind child care relates to the struggle against poverty. The federal government has a sorry record when it comes to dealing with poverty. The promises made 15 years ago were not kept in the 2000 campaign. This government is ineffective in fighting poverty. Those that would handle it better, that is, the provinces, including Quebec, do not get any help and do not have enough resources because of the fiscal imbalance. and because this government takes all the resources and plays the sorcerer's apprentice of child care. It is too bad that the great goalie, who was my childhood hero, is the one who is blocking Quebec's progress in the area of child care. It is distressing and sad.

I am the Bloc Québécois housing critic. I realize that in a few years, if we do not resolve this problem immediately, we will have to beg for another transfer to Quebec. This might generate all sorts of absurdities as well, such as at the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, which enjoys a \$2.5 billion surplus and keeps it in its coffers, without helping people get a roof over their head at a better price, as its mandate suggests.

In a few years I do not want us still begging. We must have the right as Quebecers to exercise our power to emancipate ourselves. The child care system in Quebec encourages employment, skill and parental involvement. It is not a state system as the Conservative ideologues would have us think. It is not a system that takes children away from their parents but one that supports parents' possibilities of having a decent life earning a living and thereby becoming better citizens.

In conclusion, the Bloc Québécois is opposed to the opposition motion and opposed to the funds going to parents. The Bloc does however fervently wish that this government would get the message, stop its shilly-shallying and decide right now to put its money where its mouth is, that is to say compensate Quebec immediately for

### *Supply*

implementation of the new child care program. We hope that the Canadian government will also get the message that more money needs to be invested for the other provinces as well, because the program it is proposing is cobbled together, underfunded and an embarrassment not only to Quebecers, as far as respecting their jurisdictions is concerned, but to all Canadians.

● (1515)

[*English*]

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member will know that in 1989 the government of the day passed a private member's motion on a Friday afternoon with 20 people in the House to seek to achieve the elimination of child poverty by the year 2000. There was not even a recorded division.

The member probably also knows that 15% of all the families in Canada are lone parent families, but they account for 54% of all the children who live in poverty. It is nonsense to say we are going to eliminate child poverty without dealing with the fundamental and social problem of the breakdown of the Canadian family.

My question for the member is more of a request for information about the Quebec model.

Some people have to work shifts or work seven days a week, or a combination thereof. How does the Quebec system deal with families who do not have Monday to Friday nine to five jobs? What exactly happens with infants? What special arrangements and ratio adjustments of caregivers to children are made for infants?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Christian Simard:** Mr. Speaker, if I understand properly, am I to interpret the question from my eminent Liberal colleague as a news announcement? In other words, does it mean that Quebec will not be getting its fair share of the child care program, and that they will instead try to impose the Canadian model on it? Is that what I am to understand?

That is not a criticism made of the Quebec program. It does not come from the OECD, or even his own minister, who keeps on using it as an example, while systematically refusing to commit to proper funding via a transfer payment with full compensation. Is he dissenting? Is that what he is telling us?

I have spoken with the director of school child care services in my riding, Mr. Jean Cormier. The program offers parents all possible flexibility. Mr. Cormier also co-ordinates child care services for the Commission scolaire de la Capitale. He was alarmed and outraged to learn that, eventually, there might be a two-fold approach with complicated funding. He thought the federal program might end up perhaps providing direct funding to private child care, which might lack the proper skills and accreditation.

*Supply*

Mr. Cormier wondered, “Are we going to have to fight for our recognition all over again? We have set up a magnificent system. Please, Mr. Simard, help us and prevent this ridiculous overlapping created by incompetents who do not understand anything about the management of child care facilities, since they have never done it, while the program in place in Quebec since 1998 is the envy of the Americas.”

I am confounded by this penny-ante morality of people who know nothing about the social sector, because they are incompetent. It is not their job.

[*English*]

**Mr. Tony Martin (Sault Ste. Marie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I commend the member on his comments this afternoon relating child care to fighting poverty and relating child care to encouraging jobs. That is exactly what this is about. This agenda does that and then some. It is a hugely important social agenda for the country and for the government.

I went to Montreal on a couple of occasions on my pan-Canadian tour on child care back in the fall. I was impressed with how rooted in the community and family the child care program in Quebec is. There are boards of directors, advisory boards and parent involvement in a myriad of different ways in the offering of those services. The parents of the children are intimately connected to the child care system in Quebec.

Perhaps the member would care to speak a bit more about that.

• (1520)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Christian Simard:** Mr. Speaker, that is a fascinating aspect. I have worked a lot in social economy enterprises in Quebec. Day cares and early childhood centres—centres de la petite enfance as they are called in Quebec—are fine examples of social economy enterprises, where parents and staff sit together on the board, with the parents in the majority. These are virtually self-managed, non-profit organizations.

In this context there is more than just learning to being good parents; they also have an opportunity to experience what their children are doing, while they are providing care and they learn to be better citizens and to manage a small business.

For people who have self-confidence problems, for single parents burdened with work, the opportunity to have their children looked after in such facilities, to be part of the management of the enterprise, and to have input as parents in the program and in the daily activities, means that they become better citizens. In the end, it makes for a better community and a better society. It is wonderful to see this. Let us recognize the expertise of people who do this in all provinces, particularly Quebec.

Let us fund it properly and not just play child care apprentices with the children's future, the way the Liberals are doing with their pseudo-program.

[*English*]

**Mr. Barry Devolin (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today and participate in this debate on child care in Canada. I want to note that I will be

splitting my time with my colleague from Edmonton—Leduc this afternoon.

I have a keen interest in this subject for a variety of reasons. First, I am a member of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills Development, Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities. As such, our committee has talked about the proposed national day care strategy. When legislation comes forward, we will no doubt be reviewing that. Therefore, I have a professional parliamentary interest in it.

Second, in a previous life, when I worked at Queen's Park for the provincial government, I served as the Ontario premier's special adviser for children's education. That was at the time when Dr. Fraser Mustard delivered his report on early years learning in Ontario. This is a seminal work and speaks to many of the issues before us today.

Third, I have some personal experience as a teacher. I am a certified ESL teacher. One time in my past I taught English to young children, preschoolers and kindergarten children in South Korea, so I have had some experience.

Last, but not least, I am the father of two children under 30 months of age, so I have a personal interest. I deal with early years learning every morning at my breakfast table and every night before they go to bed.

As a result of all these, last fall I decided to create an early years round table in my riding. I wanted to talk to people active in early years learning and day care. I do not profess to be an expert in the field, but I wanted to bring together a group of people with a variety of perspectives who could inform me on what was going on in the riding, what were some of the challenges they saw going forward and what they were looking for in public policy in this area.

My riding is in central Ontario, Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock. It is rural. It is a scattering of small villages and people living between those villages. One thing we have learned over the years is that often programs devised by experts or civil servants living in downtown Ottawa or downtown Toronto often do not work well in a rural community.

Through my discussions with my early years round table and with other groups in my riding, I have identified several concerns going forward in terms of what the government doing. I raise these in a general context because at this point none of us actually knows what the government is proposing. There has been much talk. It has been stressed many times today that the Liberal government's commitment to do something about early years learning and about day care goes back 10 years. On the one hand we are all taking the, we will believe it when we see it approach. Beyond that, the minister has talked in generalities about the program, but we really do not know what is in it yet.

My comments are not specific criticisms or our concerns about the government's program, given that we have not seen it. Rather they are more general comments which I have heard, and they fall under three different categories.



*Supply*

The first group of comments have come from working families in my riding. One concern is that many people work irregular hours. They work shift work. If they are in retail, they may work evenings and weekends. They want to ensure that whatever government does to help them with child care or to help them pay for the cost of child care, that it will be sufficiently flexible for someone who works a 4 to 11 shift or who works on Sunday will have access to a program.

This is particularly true in a rural community where we do not have the critical mass in many of these small villages to create a government owned and operated system. At present, many people scramble to find child care for their kids and pay for it. There is a concern that the minister and the government, in conjunction with our Ontario Liberal government and the Ontario Liberal minister, would like to move toward a national system, or what I would call kind of a monolithic publicly owned and operated system that looks a lot like schools.

• (1525)

Ontario has had grade one for a long time. We have had kindergarten for many years. More recent, junior kindergarten was introduced in Ontario. I guess the concern is we went from SK to JK. Now we will have JJK and JJJK. Basically, we are extending the elementary school system down.

For anyone who works shift work or weekends, the notion that the schoolhouse will not now accept two year olds and three year olds does nothing to solve their problem, if they do not happen to have a 9:00 to 3:00 job, Monday to Friday, with holidays off.

That is a real concern in Ontario. Recent moves by the Ontario minister to introduce day care in schools on the opposite half day of when children are in half day kindergarten suggests that this is where the government will go. That will do nothing for working families in a rural riding such as mine who have to put their kids in care during irregular hours.

The second group of concerns has to do with families who choose to have one parent stay at home with their children. For most families, this is a financial sacrifice. It is a decision that people make because they feel it is important that one of the two parents stays home with the child during those early and formative years.

The concern is this. If government moves forward with some public system, similar to the public school system we all pay for through our taxes, but it is optional whether we participate, those parents who choose to stay at home will effectively be discriminated against, in the sense that they will pay through their taxes for the public system. However, if they choose not to participate, they will also have to pay for the care of the children themselves.

I asked the minister a question this morning. We had the authors of the recent OECD report on early years before our committee a couple of weeks ago. There was much discussion around test results of children who come out of different kinds of programs. One of the authors who participated via video conference from Paris noted that children who stayed at home with the parents did very well in the scores.

I reject the notion that children who are looked after at home by their parents or by relatives will inevitably perform more poorly in

tests and will perform more poorly when they ultimately move on to elementary education.

The third point I want to raise has also been brought up many times today. It has to do with cost. The quick math is that the Minister of Social Development frequently refers to the Quebec model, which costs somewhere between \$1 billion and \$2 billion. I am not saying the minister is saying this, but if we put in a similar system is across the country, it would cost about \$10 billion a year. The federal government has made a commitment of \$5 billion over five years. That is \$1 billion a year, which is approximately 10% of the final cost of what this program would cost at full build out.

The minister has said many times, including last Friday when he was interviewed in Vancouver, that this is the first step, that basically the government is opening the door. A billion dollars is a significant amount, but he recognizes it is not nearly enough to pay for what he hopes ultimately blooms from his idea. I agree with him. It is not nearly enough. My question is from where will the other \$9 billion come?

Both provincial and municipal officials have had lots of experience with federal governments that announce some grand strategy and program, get everyone excited, get everyone's expectations up, then the federal government puts a small amount of money on the table and the provinces and municipalities are left picking up the balance.

In this case, given that it is only a five year commitment, there is even concern that if the federal government steps back five years from now, the provinces and the municipalities will be left carrying the entire bag.

Any sort of a universal national day care system, even if it is one implemented by the provinces, will ultimately cost many billions of dollars. I suspect it will cost \$10 billion or more. The question is, and provincial and municipal governments have the right to ask the question, who will come up with the rest of that money? If it is the provinces, then they will want to have a say at the front end.

The motion we have brought forward today is eminently sensible. The government has made a commitment to reduce taxes to low and middle income families. That is a step in the right direction. If dollars flow through parents, it gives parents the choice to provide or to find the kind of child care and early learning opportunities which work for them in their circumstances.

• (1530)

I agree with many of my colleagues who have pointed out that this is federal incursion into provincial jurisdiction. It seems to me that the federal government has enough of its own problems right now. It also has its own responsibilities which is not doing a very good job of looking after, such as our national armed forces. Why is it wandering into areas of provincial jurisdiction?

I would encourage all my colleagues on all sides of the House to support the amendment. Let us move forward with the program that will ultimately empower parents and put them in a position where they can make the choices that are best for their families.

*Supply*

**Hon. Eleni Bakopanos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Social Development (Social Economy), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have listened very carefully all day to the debate that has taken place in the House. I think we have to agree that there will never be much of a meeting of the minds in terms of how we view this issue. Repeating information about what the minister said or did not say or calling him names, as was the case during question period, is certainly not the way to go about this debate.

However, I want to bring something to the attention of the hon. member. We talk a lot about polls. On February 14, the *Toronto Star* reported on a poll by Ekos. It showed that 61% of Canadians stated how they would like to see more investment in social programs, while only 19% made tax cuts their top priority. Wrapping tax cuts in kids' clothing is not the way to put a system together.

The system does exist. The provinces have said that we should work with them to provide the tools that will be needed. In some cases those tools may be money. In other cases there may be expertise that can be shared around the table. We have a collaborative effort in terms of the provinces, not in terms of imposing our view but sitting around a table and reaching a consensus with the provinces on this issue. That is what the minister has tried to do.

On the other side I have heard nothing in terms of recommendations. How do they propose to work with the provinces? The provinces have already said that they want to work with the federal government. Canadians want us to work together to provide for those families who need early learning and child care, options they have chosen for their children.

What does the hon. member propose to do with the provinces? That was my question this morning to the hon. member for Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar. It is the same question for that hon. member. The provinces have already said to the government that they want to work with us, and we have put the money on the table.

**Mr. Barry Devolin:** Mr. Speaker, first, I have never called the minister names. I do not think there is anything I said in my statement today that was a misstatement of facts. I want to clarify that. In terms of the provinces wanting to work with the federal government, I would say some provinces do and some do not.

I want to make a couple of points.

First, many people believe that government should help them in the provision of child care services and early learning opportunities. That is a provincial jurisdiction. It has been a provincial jurisdiction. Many provinces, including Quebec and Ontario, have made significant strides in those areas. The provincial governments are more than able and capable of dealing with this issue. I do not think that there is either wisdom, or accountability or competence in Ottawa that cannot be found in provincial capitals. I do not agree with the notion that somehow the federal government is necessary to coordinate or to make this happen.

In terms of the money, obviously provincial governments of all political stripes, which are struggling to balance their budgets and fund their programs, are interested when the federal government comes along offering money. I have said many times before that we have a fiscal imbalance in Canada and that there are officials from

two levels of government, namely municipal and provincial governments, who go to bed every night and worry about how they will pay for things. It is only one level of government that goes to bed at night and tries to figure out how it will spend all the money.

That is my point in this case. If the federal government is offering money to the provinces to help them with the costs of child care, I am sure that the provinces will accept that money. I do not accept the notion that the federal government in any way can bring things to the debate that the provinces could not find themselves.

Second, we are not just talking about tax cuts. We also are talking about tax credits. If the federal government has made a commitment to investing federal dollars in child care, rather than flow those dollars through large institutions, where they will inevitably absorb a large amount of that money, we think those dollars should be flowed through parents so parents can make decisions about how they want to spend those dollars. Parents in different provinces, based on the options available to them, can determine what is right for them.

• (1535)

**Mr. Tony Martin (Sault Ste. Marie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I know the member has some knowledge of this portfolio because of his work at Queen's Park. I was there when Fraser Mustard and Margaret McCain presented a report. On the whole question of flowing money from the federal government to the provinces, why does the member have such a difficult time with the federal government then holding the provinces accountable in some way for the spending of that money?

**Mr. Barry Devolin:** Mr. Speaker, I believe in accountability. My point is that provincial members are accountable. The member for Sault Ste. Marie will know that in Ontario the ridings are essentially the same.

I do not understand why the federal government feels it has to be accountable for these dollars. The provincial governments by constitutional mandate are responsible for these services. If a province misspends the dollars, then the taxpayers, the citizens and the parents of that province have the right to deal directly with the province. I do not think the federal government needs to play nanny to the provinces.

**Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to rise to address the motion put forward by our leader which states:

That the House call upon the government to address the issue of child care by fulfilling its commitment to reduce taxes for low and modest income families in the upcoming budget, and, so as to respect provincial jurisdiction, ensure additional funds for child care are provided directly to parents.

At the outset I want to outline the Conservative Party position. We do recognize that parents are in the best position to determine how to care for and educate their children. They are the ones who make the best decisions, not the federal government and not any one political party.

Also, there is no one size fits all system of child care that could possibly be created by any government to meet the needs of all Canadian families and children. The fact is we stand for choice. We stand for alternatives which would include obviously some form of day care, but would include other forms, such as day home, which a lady in my office uses. It would include one of the parents in a partnership making a choice to stay at home to care for their children, especially in those early years. It would include the issue of choice.

It is not to say we could not do more to assist parents and children in finding care and in expanding learning opportunities. Access to quality early learning programs and child care is critical to the future of a person's development and to the future of our society.

Unlike the government, we in this party realize that these programs can be delivered in a number of ways, including direct payments to parents through deductions and other policy measures. We do support some of the basic initiatives that have been put in place by the government, such as the child tax benefit, which goes mainly toward lower income families. For all families, for all parents, we want to see a level of choice that enables them to make the best decisions for their children.

The previous speaker raised the issue of provincial jurisdiction. The member opposite raised the question should the federal government be holding the provincial government accountable. The fact is the provincial government is the level of government closer to the people. It is the level of government, according to the Constitution, which has been given responsibility for more social programs. It is a level of government which in the past has been the most innovative and creative in dealing with social issues.

The federal government can, through the child tax benefit, through providing a tax credit, allow parents to make a choice. It can enable parents to make decisions for their children by providing more fiscal room for them to do so. The fact is we should respect provincial jurisdiction in this area.

The member who spoke previously also pointed out that the federal government has a number of responsibilities on which quite frankly it has been failing. Federal responsibilities are outlined in the Constitution.

Citizenship and immigration is one of them. Can we honestly say that this is being well handled by the government? Eighty per cent of the case files in my office are immigration files, frankly because the bureaucracy is in a complete flux over the number of cases that are brought before it. Is the whole issue of national defence being handled well by the federal government? On international trade there are issues with the beef industry and with softwood lumber.

Those are the issues on which a national federal government should be focusing. It should not always be delving into and interfering in areas of provincial jurisdiction.

I want to touch upon some of the issues relating to federal policies and the family. There is not one department that deals with this issue. There is instead a set of diverse policies, such as tax policies, social assistance policies, industrial policies, health policies and education policies that work in tandem to support all types of families.

### *Supply*

The Conservative motion we are debating today highlights changes in tax policy as one way to help children. This is something the federal government could legitimately do to assist families in the raising of their children. It is an important point.

As Don Drummond from the TD Bank has recently pointed out, the take home pay of the average Canadian worker has stagnated during the Liberal government's time in office. Between 1989 and 2004, real after tax income per worker rose just 3.6%. That is an absolute shame, as the member behind me just said. That is frankly one of the biggest problems.

Most of my friends have kids. They face these challenges and choices all the time, where to allocate resources and what kind of decisions to make. The fact is they have felt the crunch. Even though government members stand up and talk about a \$100 billion tax cut, which was really only \$47 billion over five years, these people actually feel the crunch. Don Drummond, bless him, actually revealed that it was a 3.6% income rise over the last 15 years.

• (1540)

Beyond this, the Vanier Institute reports that two-thirds of Canadian families are short of cash at the end of the year. They make tough choices during the year, but at the end of the year two-thirds of them still come up short.

At the prebudget hearings in the finance committee witness after witness talked about the importance of personal tax cuts but not in some abstract sense about helping the economy, which it would do. They talked about tax cuts in a real personal sense of allowing individual Canadians and families to better allocate their own resources, to have more control over their own lives because they would have more control over their own resources.

The fact is we look at taxes in sort of an abstract way in the House, but they should not be looked at that way. They should be looked at as taking a person's life energy. For people who work 40 hours a week, the government takes 20 hours of their life energy that they pour into their jobs. They would like to use that for their kids, their families and their own pursuits but it is taken away. That is actually taking a person's life energy away, not some abstract concept.

The fact is that tax cuts and the resulting increase in disposable real income, which has not risen over the last 15 years, allows families to make real choices that address their needs. They are choices such as obtaining dental care for their kids, allowing their kids to play on a soccer team or a hockey team, purchasing a new computer, sending their kids to nursery school. These are the real choices that people could make if they had more income in their pockets.

### *Supply*

I challenge the Liberals on the opposite side to ask any parent the simple question of who they would rather make the choice as to where they spend money. Would the parents rather it be the federal government or themselves who decide how to allocate resources? Every person I have asked, especially people of my generation who have children, who he or she would like to make this decision, has answered that they would make the best decision in the case of their children. That is basically the philosophy behind this motion, to really gear more disposable income toward parents to allow them to make the choices.

My party believes in a strong education system to support our society. I am the son of two teachers. I can say that it was an absolute blessing for me to have two teachers as parents. It was an unbelievable blessing. They certainly taught me the importance of education not only for me as a person but for our society, our social fabric.

The reality is our education system could be improved by working with the provinces. Education is primarily a provincial responsibility.

The minister often speaks about the first six years of a person's life being the most important. Most people in the House would agree that the first six years, if not the most important, certainly are the ones that determine to a certain extent how a person will turn out. They are very important and should be addressed. Children who enter school ready to learn are more likely to continue on a positive path during their entire school year. Early childhood education programs like nursery school, play groups, home study programs and formal day care are part of this network.

Each child learns differently and each family has different needs and wants. These differences could be genetic, cognitive, economic or cultural. No two families are the same. We as policy makers must be sensitive to these differences. Parents should have choices as to programs available to their children, including if they choose to do so, staying at home with them.

If parents choose to stay at home, they should not be punished for making that choice. The key is that the option should be available, day care, day home, or staying at home, and parents should not be punished for the decision they make.

In conclusion, the overall philosophy behind the motion is to give parents the means and resources to make the decisions and allow them to make the choice and for the provincial and federal governments to respect the choices they make.

• (1545)

**Hon. Peter Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to the previous two speakers. I am a big supporter of universal high quality early childhood education and child care. The sooner that reaches every corner of this great country, the better. I am intrigued by the view of my colleagues opposite of the role of the federal government.

I strongly accept that there are three levels of government, the federal government, the provincial government and the municipal government. I greatly have supported the efforts of the federal government to strengthen the municipal level. I do believe there has been downloading from the provinces, as well as from the federal

government, on to the municipal level. I strongly support the gas tax and the GST allocation. The municipal governments in Canada need to be strengthened. I am looking now to the provinces also allocating to them more long term resources so that the municipalities can perform their role better.

My view is that in addition to the traditional constitutional roles of the federal government, one of our jobs in that circle of three is very often to kickstart things. I do accept that.

There has been mention of our only flowing \$5 billion. One of the reasons we have the \$5 billion now is that we made changes in the federal system in the 1990s. The federal government now has a surplus and we are able to do that.

I know that my colleague is not from my province, but in my own province the tax cuts by his party, the Harris government, were five times greater than the cuts which we made in putting the federal house in order.

What is his view of the role of the federal government in a case like this? I am not saying the federal government should deliver this child care. I am saying the municipalities and the provinces should deliver it. Does he not think that the role of the senior level of government now is to kickstart this thing so that our children will be better off?

• (1550)

**Mr. James Rajotte:** Mr. Speaker, actually there are not three levels of government. There are three orders of government. The municipal level is not recognized within our Constitution. I think the member—

**Hon. Peter Adams:** Are you proposing to do that?

**Mr. James Rajotte:** Mr. Speaker, no, I am not proposing to do that. I am just recognizing the reality as it is. I think the member misspoke.

I find it a little ironic that the member would criticize the Ontario provincial government for downloading on to the municipalities when the finance minister, the current Prime Minister, was the ultimate downloader of all time.

If the member wants to talk about a fiscal imbalance, this is the fiscal imbalance: the federal government raises two-thirds of the revenues across Canada but provides one-third of the services. That is a fiscal imbalance. The fact is that the Liberal government in the mid-1990s downloaded everything on to the other two orders of government. That was the basic problem with the fiscal imbalance.

In terms of which order of government, which level should actually do child care, I have been very clear in saying it is a matter of provincial jurisdiction.

What the federal government ought to do is get its own house in order. It should deal with citizenship and immigration, get the border open to our beef and our softwood, repair our national defence, none of which the government is doing. It has failed miserably on every one of those counts. Instead it interferes into provincial jurisdiction. It interferes with municipalities. It should get its own house in order. It should leave these areas of social responsibility to the provinces, which can better deal with them.

**Mr. Tony Martin (Sault Ste. Marie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to welcome the member for Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam into the debate this afternoon and let him know that I appreciated his comment about choice. It was similar to the comment made earlier by the member for Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock.

I do not think anybody would disagree that parents need to have choices and should be allowed to make choices, particularly where their younger children are concerned. As a matter of fact, some of my own children went to junior kindergarten and some of them did not, depending on whether they were ready or not.

If there is not a child care system out there funded by government and available, there really is no choice is there?

**Mr. James Rajotte:** Mr. Speaker, I should correct the member. I am not the member for Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam. He is known as “James the greater” and I am “James the lesser”, and everyone can understand why.

I am not against institutional day care. However, I do believe that if the citizens of a province, Alberta for example, such as has been done in Quebec, feel that they want to make this option more available, they want to fund it more, then they are free to do so, at the provincial level. What I believe is that it should be funded at the provincial level.

What the federal government ought to do is do all it can to leave more resources in the hands of parents and allow them to make the decision as to what type of care they want.

Whether institutional day care is funded across the country, it should not be funded by the federal government. Instead it should be funded by the provincial government as reasonably requested to do so by the citizens in the province.

**Hon. Maria Minna (Beaches—East York, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Oak Ridges—Markham.

I will not be supporting the motion before us today. I believe very strongly that our children deserve a better start in life. At least 70% of women in families in Canada work. They work because they have to and they work because they choose to; I do not think it matters why they work. The important thing is that 70% of women in this country do work. I say that only because this issue of child care goes along with the issue of poverty. Child care is a major issue for women who work, especially single parents.

I want to broaden the debate, though, because this is not just about child care. It is not just about childminding. It is not about babysitting. We are not talking about babysitting. We are not talking about looking after children to make sure they are safe. Of course we are talking about children being safe, but also we are talking about

### *Supply*

the developmental issues. I believe that every child, regardless of whether the parent is working or not, needs to have at least half a day of early education experience.

I am not talking only about assisting families where parents both work or assisting single parent families that need early education and child care in order to be able to work. I am talking about giving all children, regardless of whether the parents work or not, the best start in life. This is extremely important.

It is not about babysitting. It is about early education. It is about providing a quality program, a developmental program, universally inclusive, for everybody, accessible to every child. This is about providing an environment in which every child is encouraged to learn and feel safe. We cannot provide a professional developmental program, a quality program, without having professional staff, and those professional staff need to be well paid and well trained. I believe, of course, that the system should be a not for profit system and should be publicly administered.

I should point out that our caucus has been getting ready for our next convention, coming up in March. We were allowed to prioritize five resolutions for presentation to the national convention and one of those resolutions deals with early education and child care. This shows the importance that our party and our government place on this issue. We also reiterate very clearly in the resolution the importance of the quad principles: quality, universality, accessibility and developmental focus.

We also reiterate in the resolution the importance of a publicly administered, not for profit sector. We remind the Government of Canada to negotiate a requirement that provinces and territories maintain or increase their own child care funding. Because the last time that we negotiated something, in the year 2000, was \$2.2 billion with the Province of Ontario, and the Government of Ontario ratcheted back off the table money that it was putting into child care and then opened up new little centres, calling them early education and early learning centres, and put its logo on them. It did this with moneys transferred from the Government of Canada. Children suffered because early education spaces were actually reduced in that province. We do not want that to happen again.

Also in our resolution, we ask the Government of Canada to maintain its current federal funding commitments under the early childhood development and multilateral framework agreements which we already have and were established in the last budget. We are talking about establishing a real commitment to early education for every child across this country.

All our experience shows very clearly that development of the brain or what some people call the wiring of the brain starts at a very early age. Many people have read the Fraser Mustard and McCain report which indicated that brain development starts from the time a child is born. From zero to three years of age, brain development is very rapid. From three to six years of age, it is extremely rapid. By the time the child reaches six years of age, which is when they would generally start grade one, it levels off somewhat, so in a sense we are investing a tremendous amount of money in elementary school, and I am not suggesting that we should not.

*Supply*

• (1555)

In this country we have decided that elementary school is compulsory, that it must be professionally delivered by professional teachers, and that it must have a proper curriculum. Why is it that we are not prepared to give the same advantage to younger children when they are at the most critical time of development in their lives, the early years, which are much earlier than elementary school years? I find it totally astounding that these many years later we are still talking about doing it through tax cuts and whatever instead of looking at the importance of every child.

I am on the finance committee. I hear about the productivity problems that Canada has. I hear about all kinds of things. Members should know that early education goes to the issue of productivity because every child would have the best start. I spoke to the Governor of the Bank of Canada, Mr. Dodge, who made a statement to the finance committee. He said that if he had one dollar left to invest, and one dollar only, and he had to choose, he would invest that dollar in early education. That was said by the Governor of the Bank of Canada, so members need not tell me that this is something we have somehow dreamed up overnight.

The OECD has chastised Canada for being so far behind. Let me tell members about what the OECD countries do and then see whether people here think they somehow have it all wrong, because there are a lot of them. In Europe in general, access rates to publicly run services are high for children aged three years to six years. About 98% of all children receive free full-day places in Belgium and France, about 96% in Italy, and about 85% in Denmark, Germany, Spain, Sweden and the U.K. Many of the same countries also provide highly subsidized places for children from one to three years of age. They have an actual target: to reach 90% of all children aged three years to six years and from zero to three years as well.

I cannot believe that everyone here is saying that Germany, Spain, Sweden, the U.K. and Denmark are somehow off the mark and have it all wrong. Quite frankly, I think we have it wrong and it is about time that we got it right.

The OECD makes some pretty strong recommendations and suggestions to our country with respect to this issue. For instance, six recommendations deal with the aspect of quality: in particular, to link accreditation of services to essential structural requirements, such as adequate funding, sufficient numbers of qualified staff, favourable child/staff ratios, enriched learning environments and resources, and the achievement of quality targets. These are very strong and very good recommendations. I believe that this is very important.

The best examples I have seen in Toronto, where good early education and child care really work, is where child care centres are attached to elementary schools. I have visited a couple of them. Where they are attached to an elementary school, the fantastic thing is that the child has a continuum, the same place to go to, and the parents have a local place to leave their children, the same place where they leave their elder children.

In one instance, the kindergarten teacher comes in to teach in the child care, the kindergarten, in a more formal way for the first half of the morning, and in the afternoon it is more creative, with the early

development teachers. The point is that in one case I know of a child was having some difficulty but it was identified early on. Before the child gets to grade 1, grade 2 or grade 3 and is lost in the system, the assistance is given very early on. This creates a seamless approach.

I would say that the challenge we have is not one of whether or not we should provide it, but one of making sure that we actually meet the needs of the different families across the country. Families have different needs, such as families in rural Canada, families who work part time, shift workers, our aboriginal communities and so on. That is where our challenge is; it is not so much in whether or not we do this but in making sure that when we in fact do it every child is included and we do not lose.

This is why we introduced parental leave for all parents as well as what I was very involved with, which was increasing the child benefit for families to ensure that there is proper income for families. This is the last piece that I am convinced we have a moral duty to provide to our children, the last piece to make sure that they have the best possible start in life.

• (1600)

**Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to approach this from a different perspective than my colleagues did, but I think I am going to arrive at the same conclusion.

I am just going to quote a couple of things I heard the member say. I just listened to the member say that our children deserve a better start in life and every child deserves half a day of early development. I am not sure I disagree with the statements themselves, but merely with who provides that development.

The member contends that it is professional quality and well paid staff who can provide the safe environment and the love that children need to succeed, but empirically, study after study demonstrates that the best outcomes for our children are actually from home schooling, from parents who teach their own children, whether those studies are about the United States or Sweden or other countries in Europe or Asia. The outcomes for children who are home schooled are actually higher for parents who do not have teaching certificates, so any parents can teach their children better than a school system can.

I do not understand how an early childhood education system is somehow going to replace parents. No one provides a better learning environment for their children than parents do. What children need is a full day of their parents at home, not a half day of development with someone else.

I have figured out the problem. Statist governments, whether they are in Ottawa or Quebec City, see autonomous families as competition to the state. That is wrong.

Here is my question. Why will this government not give children their true best start and cut its bloated spending so parents can work fewer hours with less stress to spend more time at home with their children, teaching them, loving them and providing them with the right atmosphere? That is going to give them a better educational outcome. It is going to give them a better financial outcome. It will give them a better relational outcome than anything the government could possibly provide.

*Supply*

•(1605)

**Hon. Maria Minna:** Mr. Speaker, quite frankly and first of all, I have never said that parents could not give love, attention, affection and guidance to their children, because of course that is fundamentally important and parents do that.

The member is totally wrong about his empirical research when he says it has been shown that the best way to make sure every child gets a better start in life is to ensure that they all have parents staying at home. There is no question: if every parent could stay at home, they might, but quite frankly, not every parent wants to stay at home. This is 2005. Not every parent can afford to stay at home. My mother could never afford to stay home. And not every parent chooses to stay home.

All of the empirical data in fact shows quite the opposite. It shows that early education is absolutely fundamental to the proper start for a child. If the hon. member is saying that every country in the western world except for Canada has a better handle on this, all of the other countries have it all wrong, and all of the data that has been accumulated on the other side, apart from the one that he is referring to, is all wrong, then I think the hon. member is not being very sure.

There is one country that knows where to put its value: on its money. If we look at the money of one country, it shows a mother and a child at the table studying and on the other side it has Mama Montessori. That country understands the value of education. It puts its value on its own money.

**Mr. Barry Devolin (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague references the OECD study. I said earlier this morning that when we had the authors appear before our committee a week or two ago, I asked one of the authors, who appeared by satellite link from Paris, a question about his comparison of test results from kids in what he called high quality environments with low quality environments. When I asked him about kids who were raised by their parents at home, his answer was that actually those children do very well in tests.

I value early years learning opportunities for children, but I reject the notion that parents, with some support and some help, cannot do that job as well or better at home themselves.

My second point, and I think this is really important, is that not only are small children absorbing facts and figures, they are absorbing values. Many parents from many different backgrounds are very uncomfortable putting their two year olds and three year olds in a public education system that they feel is further and further from their own values. I would like to hear the member's comments on that.

**Hon. Maria Minna:** Mr. Speaker, first, I was not at the meeting, so I am not going to comment on that, but I find it incredible that the hon. member thinks children who go to a public school are learning values that are further and further away from families. That would suggest the public school system in this country is not working.

In fact, I think it works very well, especially in a multicultural society where children ought to be together in the same environment, where they are exposed to one another, working together, learning about each other and learning how to respect one another, how to work together and how to be able to build a country together. To be

honest, I find the hon. member's comments about the public system not working for many parents because the values are different quite astounding.

**Mr. Lui Temelkovski (Oak Ridges—Markham, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak to the motion raised by the official opposition. I am grateful for this opportunity because it provides me with the chance to remind members from all parties, and indeed all Canadians, about several of the extraordinary measures that our government has taken in recent years to reduce the tax burden faced by our citizens from coast to coast.

Let me be clear. Our government has always recognized the need to reduce the tax burden on Canadians and their families. This is because we have always understood that ensuring that our tax system is fair and competitive plays an important role in building a 21st century economy while also strengthening our social foundations. With the elimination of the federal deficit in 1997, the government provided tax relief in both the 1998 and 1999 budgets. In 2000 the government unveiled the most ambitious and far-reaching tax cutting effort ever launched in Canadian history, the five year tax reduction plan.

As we announced at the time of the 2000 federal budget, our government tax reduction efforts would be founded on four broad principles.

First, while a tax reduction must ultimately benefit all Canadians, it must primarily benefit those who need it the most: middle and low income earners, especially families with children. Second, broad-based tax reductions should focus initially on personal income taxes. Third, the business tax system must be internationally competitive. Finally, broad-based tax reductions should not be financed with borrowed money.

With these factors in mind and with strong economic growth underpinning a surging Canadian economy, our government set out a five year tax plan that aimed specifically at reducing Canada's personal and business tax levels by \$100 billion over five years. This plan, which has provided real and significant tax relief, was initially anchored by two fundamental structural changes.

First, the plan dealt with the issues of inflation and its effects on tax rates. As all members of the House know, taxes cannot come down in earnest until they stop going up with inflation. With this in mind, we made the most significant change to Canada's tax system in more than 10 years. In the 2000 budget the government restored full indexation to the personal income tax system, effective January 1, 2000.

Second, our government did something that no government in the previous 12 years had been able to do. We lowered the actual tax rate of Canadians. Over the five year period of our tax reduction plan, we have lowered the middle tax rates from 26% to 23%. Most importantly, two-thirds of that reduction, down to 24%, came into effect on July 1, 2000.

### Supply

Reindexing the tax system and lowering the tax rates have, over the past five years, provided a significant benefit for all Canadians, but our government has gone further. We have increased the amounts Canadians can earn tax free to \$8,000 and we have raised the income tax levels at which middle and upper tax rate begin to apply to \$35,000 and \$75,000 respectively.

They are important structural changes that have occurred in Canada's tax system. They have benefited millions of Canadians and have helped contribute to a higher quality of life for our citizens. Some of the most important and in many ways the most significant changes we have made directly relate to the support we have provided to Canadian families through our reform of the tax system.

• (1610)

I hardly need to remind my hon. colleagues that the cost of raising children is a significant expense. Ask any parent about the price of new shoes or snowsuits. Ask any parent whose child plays sports or takes music lessons. Ask any parent trying to save for their children's education.

The purpose of the Canada child tax benefit, CCTB, is to help with these costs. When we asked Canadians about what we would do to help them provide their children with the best possible start in life, one of the key issues they raised with us was the need to ensure that our tax system provided support for low and modest income families. We listened and, more importantly, we took action.

In budget 2000, we increased the maximum amount a family could receive under the Canada child tax benefit for its first child to \$1,975, but we did not stop there. In fact, we announced a further increase in July 2001 to \$2,265. In subsequent budgets we continued to raise the maximum and in the most recent year, 2004, it stood at \$2,719. By the time the current round of mandated increases is over in 2007, the maximum CCTB benefit will stand at \$3,243. That is more than double the \$1,520 level in 1996. That is a clear example of our commitment to provide significant and sustained tax relief to Canadian families.

Canadians have also benefited from the significant reduction in employment insurance rates over the past decade. Each and every year for the past 11 years the government has lowered EI rates, which have fallen from their peak of \$3.07 in 1994 to the current level of \$1.95. As a result of these rate reductions, employers and employees will pay \$10.5 billion less in premiums in 2005 than they would have paid under the 1994 rate.

I could go on about other measures the government has taken to provide support to Canadian families. I could speak about the substantial support it provides to persons with disabilities through the disability tax credit and the medical expenses tax credit. I could point to other efforts to help families provide funding for their children's post-secondary education through the establishment of the Canada education savings grant and the Canada learning bond. I could speak of the support that we have provided to small business owners and entrepreneurs, many of whom are operating family run businesses to help them achieve success. Instead, I will conclude my remarks with some facts for my colleagues.

First, the five year tax reduction plan represents the largest tax cuts in Canadian history. Second, three-quarters of the benefits from this

plan are flowing to individuals, with most of the tax relief going to low and modest income Canadians. Indeed, in the current fiscal year, the tax reduction plan has lowered federal personal income tax by 21% on average and 27% for families with children.

Make no mistake about it. These measures have translated into real benefits for Canadians from all walks of life. For example, a typical single parent with one child and an income of \$25,000 in 2004 would have received an additional \$1,139 in annual net federal benefits compared to what would have happened if the tax reduction plan had not been in place. A typical single income family of four earning \$40,000 in 2004 now pays \$2,003 less in annual net federal tax. These are real tangible savings and they are making a difference in the lives of millions of Canadians and their children.

Given the government's strong commitment to providing support for low and modest income Canadians and their families, I will not be supporting the opposition motion and urge all of my colleagues to join me.

• (1615)

**The Deputy Speaker:** It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Fisheries; and the hon. member for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia, Health.

**Mr. Tony Martin (Sault Ste. Marie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciated the information that was shared by the member in terms of some of the programs that have been put in place to alleviate poverty and support families with low to modest income. We need to do more of that. Certainly, there is no one in our caucus who would disagree that we need to help families look after themselves, look after their children, and have the money to make some of the choices that we keep hearing about in this place today.

The reality is that one choice will not be there. Unless the government is willing to take a strong stand, put significant money, work with the provinces to ensure that there is a national child care program in place, the spaces will not be there and they will not be affordable.

I want to ask the member a question regarding the national child tax benefit. He may be aware that some provinces are in fact clawing that money back from some of our most at risk and marginalized families on social assistance. I think of Ontario where I served for 13 years and launched a campaign in my last few years there to stop the clawback. Could he talk to us about how that happened and how this government might stop that discriminatory practice which is really hurting some of our most at risk and vulnerable families?



•(1620)

**Mr. Lui Temelkovski:** Mr. Speaker, when tax programs are put in place federally, they do have some jurisdiction over provincial matters. In this case, when a province would prefer to claw back on benefits, we are definitely not in agreement and do not condone those types of practices. They hurt the most vulnerable people in our society, which are modest and low income families.

**Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservative Party is providing an alternative of choices with respect to assisting families with child care. The Liberal government has no choice. The money is going to go into day care. That is it. In fact, I am not even too sure whether it is going to be public day care or private day care. I suspect it is going to be mainly public day care.

The member for Oak Ridges—Markham spent a great deal of time on the financing of child care, but as I understand it, the \$5 billion that is being set aside by the Liberal government is coming from the surplus and that is going to be spread over five years. I have two questions. Should that issue not be debated in the House? The issue of this slush fund, this \$5 billion that is coming out of a surplus by surprise, and unilaterally the Prime Minister of the country says this is going to go into child care. Should that not be debated? Finally, what happens to day care in this country after five years?

**Mr. Lui Temelkovski:** Mr. Speaker, we definitely support the public day care program. We ran on it in the last campaign and we are going to deliver what we said we would during the election campaign. In regard to the debate, this is part of the debate. There are ongoing debates that will be continuing. The minister for child care will be unveiling a program. He is in discussions with the provinces to ensure they strike an agreement that is appropriate for all Canadians.

**Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Simcoe—Grey.

I am pleased to take part in the debate today on the very important subject of child care on behalf of my constituents in Fleetwood—Port Kells.

Today's motion is about recognizing that parents and not the federal government are in the best position to determine which type of child care best suits their children. The government believes that Canadians want a one size fits all national child care program.

The Conservative Party supports giving parents a choice in child care. We propose giving parents the financial flexibility to make their decisions about what is best for their kids.

To say that Canada's greatest natural resource is its people is a gross understatement. I have no desire to trivialize or indulge in partisan politics with a subject that cuts across party lines. There should be no political line in the sand insofar as child care is concerned.

Children are our future. Their health, well-being and education will guarantee that future.

Governments, municipal, provincial and federal, have failed our children miserably in allowing change to overtake reality without recognizing the change and putting mechanisms in place to accommodate it.

### *Supply*

Our society has done a complete 180 degree turn. When we were children, the husband was the breadwinner and the wife stayed at home. Wives jokingly called themselves domestic engineers and there was nothing that they could not do in the house.

In 1967 only 17% of mothers with preschool age children were employed outside the home. Today that number is approaching 80%.

By preference or for financial necessity, both parents have gone out into the labour force. For some it is fulfilling the desire for a second car in the driveway, a bigger house, winter or summer vacations or finding the cash for university tuition for their children.

For others it is a matter of needing the extra income to provide for the very basic necessities of life; food, clothing and shelter. The reality of life in North America, not just in Canada, is that there is a need for child care or day care.

I am new to Parliament and I often wondered why throne speeches were called governor generalities. Now I know. The most current throne speech is certainly no exception. The few lines in the throne speech dealing with child care are an insult to our intelligence. The only buzz words in the two or three sentences where I see hope are "quality, universality, accessibility and development", which could apply to a hot dog concession at a Knights of Columbus picnic. They certainly do not constitute a declaration of legislative intent.

What I want to know is what the plan will encompass, how it would be implemented and when and how much the federal government is prepared to commit in partnership with other levels of government.

I am amused to see the Minister of Social Development meeting with his provincial counterparts last Friday. The poor man had no goalie stick to lean on and he looked very uncomfortable.

The government's response to child care is inadequate and certainly not well thought out. Canadians will not be gulled or fooled by empty government promises. Or, is the government fooling itself by attempting to convey an impression of progress?

There is a line of a child's book, *Alice in Wonderland*, I believe, where one of the characters accuses another of confusing motion with activity. The Liberal government, and particularly its leader, has been looking confused for some time.

If we were to lump together all the boondoggles in which the government has been involved, HRDC, EI, the gun registry, ad scam, high spending diplomats and senior mandarins, and other spending abuses, we would end up with a very healthy kick-start to any national program for child care.

### Supply

We in the Conservative Party recognize that the parents in communities across Canada are the best judges of which child care program is best for their children. To the contrary, the Liberals believe that universal means that a program is the same across Canada.

• (1625)

We believe that each defined community and each defined ethnic group should have the right to tailor their program to their needs. Parents must have that choice. Governments at the three levels have a responsibility only to provide basic universal standards of health, safety, cleanliness and qualified and safe caregivers. Beyond that, it should be left to the local communities to structure their programs to meet their specific needs.

One size child care does not fit all child care programs. One size child care does not recognize the rapidly changing mosaic of Canada.

Not far from this building there are already operational Hebrew child care facilities. In many parts of my province of British Columbia, there are communities where there are very large Indian, Chinese, Italian and German populations. Their needs will not be met by throwing their children in a melting pot because the only two languages recognized and deemed to be official languages are French and English. Not recognizing the contribution that immigration makes to Canada will defeat the basic premise and deny the wishes of the local community.

A made in Ottawa child care program is not the answer. It will not work. The program's roots must spring up in local communities and if they are all different, so be it. Parents know best, not Ottawa bureaucrats or cabinet ministers far removed from the reality of life across Canada.

We in the Conservative Party will continue to give our unqualified support to all existing child benefits and, when we form a government, one of our first priorities will be to introduce broadly based tax relief that will directly impact on parents and allow them to make the key choices of care and education for their children.

Any child care program put in place must recognize that although values must be constant, cultures and traditions differ in different parts of this great country.

The Conservative Party believes that parents deserve options. We are a multicultural society and child care should recognize that reality. Canadians want their children to be raised and educated in a way that reflects their values, cultures and traditions. The Liberal one size fits all day care system is misguided and unfair. The government is promising inadequate funding. It has limited support among the provinces. It is dealing in an area over which Ottawa has no jurisdiction.

However, most important, the Liberal proposal does not allow parents to have such a dramatic impact on the care and nurturing of their children, and that is unacceptable.

• (1630)

**Hon. Eleni Bakopanos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Social Development (Social Economy), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with much care to the hon. member's speech but I

just want to clarify two things on what we have been saying all day today.

No one on this side of the House is talking about not giving parents a choice. The parliamentary secretary did mention the tax advantages that we have given to low and middle income Canadians in order to have the means to choose where they would like to place their children, whether at home with themselves or in a child care centre. Whatever the circumstances, economic or being single parents, those options are exactly what we are trying to ensure those parents have. That is why we are working with the provinces.

There is a system in place at the moment and that is what I want the hon. member to acknowledge. The provinces have come together with the federal government to establish a national system for those parents who choose early learning in child care facilities. It is not a question of us imposing or of us telling parents what to do. The parents have those options at the moment. We are not imposing anything.

I would like to ask the hon. member again the question I have been asking all day. When the provinces come to the table and ask for assistance in terms of coming up with a system that can respond to the various needs of parents across the country, what is the Conservative Party proposing to those provinces that have agreed to come to the table?

**Mrs. Nina Grewal:** Mr. Speaker, what I want to say is that a one size fits all child care program fails to provide parents with the choices they need to address the specific needs of the children. I and my party believe that quality child care should be accessible to all but the shape it takes must be left up to the parents.

**Mr. Ken Epp (Edmonton—Sherwood Park, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as my colleague was talking about the years gone past, it certainly reminded me of our situation. My wife and I were married before the time of technological on-off switches for when babies were born and so our family started growing within a year.

We made the decision then that my wife would be a full time mom. At that time we could afford it. My annual income was about \$5,300, as I recall, and my taxes were about \$25 or \$30 a month. When we compare that to what families have to face nowadays, we see that a proportion of income that goes to taxation is a hundred times as big now as it was then. Our incomes are maybe ten times as big.

The fact is that it is high taxes that are driving a lot of parents into the workforce and to find other care for their children. That has been our experience and I think that it is probably true when 70% of parents say that if they had the choice they would like to stay home with their families. Therefore, increasing the taxes so that those people who go to work have to pay even more taxes to fund this, does not solve that particular problem. The money must go to the families.

I would like my colleague to comment on that particular point of view.

•(1635)

**Mrs. Nina Grewal:** Mr. Speaker, I agree with the hon. member. I think we should give parents tax deductions of \$2,000 to \$3,000 and allow them to spend it on child care. It should be a matter of their choice, be it formal day care, in the home care, stay at home parenting or otherwise.

**Ms. Helena Guergis (Simcoe—Grey, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise with pleasure today to speak on the Conservative Party's motion on child care funding.

I believe it is very important that assistance should be provided to parents and that they should be able to choose the type of child care they want for their children. After all, parents know what is best for their children.

The Liberal one size fits all child care program has been criticized lately by the provinces. The criticism echoes what the Conservative Party has been saying all along; that the program fails to provide parents with the choices they need to address the specific and varying needs of their children.

This is why the Conservative Party will continue to support all existing child benefit programs, such as the national child benefit, the early childhood development initiative, the multilateral framework on early learning and child care and other federal government support of early learning and child care in Canada. Of course the Conservative Party would introduce a broad based tax relief that would directly benefit parents and would allow them to make their own choices about the care and nurturing of their children.

We believe parents deserve options. They want their children to be raised and educated in a way that reflects their family values, cultures and traditions. A Liberal institutional day care system will not allow parents to have such a dramatic impact on the care and nurturing of their children. It will not reflect their family values, cultures or traditions. This is very sad.

Let us not mention the fact that total child care expenditures have risen by over 20% in the last 20 years. Demand for child care services has risen and fees for full time day care are on the rise. The cost of living has also risen dramatically, causing the rate of employment for mothers with preschool age children to rise from 17% in 1967 to 65% in 1997. Eighty-three per cent of married couples with children both work, and the percentage of single mothers working has soared to 82%. That trend is continuing.

That is why choice is so important. Parents should not be forced to put their children in an institution that the government wants. They should be free to raise and educate them in a manner that they feel is in the best interests of their children.

Early childhood education is so important because this period sets the stage for long term emotional, behavioural and intellectual well-being. That is why we need to have the necessary childhood programs to prepare children to succeed in school, to improve the well-being of all of our children and facilitate the participation of parents in the labour force and continuing education.

However, the Liberal program is just not up to the job. That is why Alberta and Quebec are considering opting out. New Brunswick has

### *Supply*

requested autonomy for its system. The current systems in Ontario and Manitoba are more advanced than the Liberal program.

The minister came out of the meeting with his provincial counterparts on Friday, and believe it or not, there was no agreement on a national child care system. Why? Because the federal government refused to provide any financial commitment beyond the five years. The provinces have seen this song and dance before and they know how it ends. The federal government launches a massive new social program and when the bill comes in, it is nowhere to be found, except maybe in this case, on the hockey rink.

Provinces are struggling now to provide good quality education, elementary education with text books that are in good repair. The Liberal government wants to launch into a whole new institutionalized day care. We cannot afford our elementary system.

A Conservative government would cater to the needs of parents and their children with a plan that would last and a plan that the provinces could and would support.

•(1640)

The Liberal government has been promising Canadians a national child care program for over 10 years. However, it is clear that once again it is not up to the job. In fact, we heard the minister talk about and describe day care over the past decade as stagnant, fragmented and unregulated. Let us give the Liberal government a round of applause on this one. It is this way because this Liberal government has failed to deliver on its promises for the last decade.

I fully support our motion. I call upon the government to address the issue of child care by fulfilling its commitment to reduce taxes for low and modest income families in the upcoming budget and, so as to respect provincial jurisdiction, ensure that additional funds for child care are provided directly to parents.

**Hon. Eleni Bakopanos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Social Development (Social Economy), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, much of the same and no answer to the question that was asked all along. No one is infringing upon provincial jurisdiction. I and the minister have said that.

As far as making choices, I will reiterate what we have already said on this side of the House. It is that choice that we want to provide for mothers who choose to put their children in early learning and child care programs. That is the choice we want to give them.

I have been asking this question on an ongoing basis. Provided that some parents choose to put their children in early learning and child care programs, what options is the member offering?

The provinces have come to the table and have said that they want to work with the federal government. They want to be able to provide for those parents who choose to put their children in early learning and child care programs, for various reasons. It is their choice. If the member believes in choice, then say so.

### Supply

Do not keep saying that tax cuts is the way to go. Tax cuts does not cut it for low income families. We have provided those tax cuts and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance has talked about the Canada child tax benefit, the national child benefit and our investment in maternal or paternal leave. We have studied all those options and have acted on them, despite what members have been saying all day.

What is the Conservative Party's position in working with the provinces, which have asked to work with the government, to establish a system that provides a choice for those parents who choose to put their children in early learning and child care facilities?

**Ms. Helena Guergis:** Mr. Speaker, I think I have been very clear in answering the questions from the hon. member in everything I have stated today. We are talking about the importance of reducing taxes for low and modest income families, not taking \$5 billion of their tax dollars and telling them that we have to institutionalize their babies.

We heard the minister say earlier today that parents and hard-working mothers and fathers cannot manage to take care of their kids. He said that the care they were getting now was mediocre. I find that appalling. There are 308 members in the House of Commons. I would like to think the majority of them were raised by their parents at home and that their parents had the choice on how they would raise them. We all turned out pretty darned good. I do not agree with the Liberal government in institutionalizing children.

Look at our seniors now. We institutionalize them. We put them into an old age home and we let them sit there. The Conservative Party has proposed a caregiver tax credit of \$7,000 for non-professional caregivers. We believe that seniors deserve the dignity of staying in their own homes. We also believe that children have the right to have the dignity to be raised in their own homes as well, unlike this Liberal government.

• (1645)

**Mr. Ken Epp (Edmonton—Sherwood Park, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I find this quite interesting. I would like to congratulate my colleague for an excellent speech, and I would like to make a comment on the words we heard from the other side.

The member opposite asked what we were going to do. One thing we will not do is tell families that they can have whatever choice they want, but they will have the dickens taxed out of them to fund one system. Why say to them that they will have choice and then load them up with taxes for the cost of a one choice system to the point where they have no choice?

I think our system would be much better. We would empower individual families to choose the care that would be best for their own children, including the possibility of one of the parents staying home to look after them. This can be done with refundable tax credits. There are many different ways in which it can be done.

The motion today says that it will be accomplished. The details probably are not worked out at this stage, but it is a goal that is worth pursuing. It is way better than a plan which says that they will be charged for a system as chosen by the government and they can choose whether to use it or not, or if they can afford it, they can go somewhere else.

**Ms. Helena Guergis:** Mr. Speaker, what is very important about the Conservative Party's position on child care is that we recognize not everyone wants to put their child into institutionalized day care. They want the opportunity to choose. The government is putting \$5 billion tax dollars just to start a program that not everyone will have the opportunity to access. There is no way we can possibly build a system to which everyone would have equal access.

We believe in providing choice. The best way to do that is to lower taxes, put more money in the pockets of Canadians so they can make a choice as to where they want to spend their dollars and how they want to raise their children.

**Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to the motion from the Conservative Party which reads:

That the House call upon the government to address the issue of child care by fulfilling its commitment to reduce taxes for low and modest income families in the upcoming budget, and, so as to respect provincial jurisdiction, ensure additional funds for child care are provided directly to parents.

The first point I want to make is that the motion is not about child care. It does not address the issue of child care as it purports and as it suggests.

The second point is that tax cuts do not pay for child care. In looking at the motion, it is so typical of what the Conservative Party is trying to do. It is trying to give hardworking families the illusion that its motion is providing choices to families. I have to say that is so misrepresented in terms of what the motion is about.

The motion is nothing more than a variation of its mantra on tax cuts, which is that tax cuts will solve all the problems in our society. The Conservatives do not specify what those tax cuts would be, but even if they were massive tax reductions, they would not produce the kind of savings that would be needed for parents to invest in the costs that are required for adequate, quality and accessible child care. Tax cuts do not pay for child care.

The motion talks about a few dollars in somebody's pocket, which I am sure they would like to see, but it would not produce the choice that is required to actually produce an accessible quality system. Let us be clear. The motion is not about choice for parents or about choice for families. It is about the perpetuation of a myth that tax cuts will solve everything in the country.

I can say that in poll after poll and in discussion group after discussion group people have said that they want real investment in social programs that are targeted toward the development and the health and well-being of children. That is what Canadian parents are telling us.

Anybody who knows anything about a child care system knows that it is a proposition that takes a real investment. Most parents are paying hundreds of dollars every month in terms of ensuring their kids are enrolled in a licensed, regulated, high quality, accessible not for profit program. They are paying \$600 and \$800 a month.

What really galls me with the motion is that the Conservative Party, for kind of a political spin, is trying to give Canadians the illusion that it is providing people with a choice.

The motion today will not create the system that we need. There is absolutely no question that it is critical that we have a major investment in a national child care program. However it will not take a few tax cuts here and there to do that. It will take a major investment and it is something that will benefit all of society, our children today as well as into the future. I will not go into all of the arguments about why early childhood development and learning is a positive, beneficial thing because I do not think those members on the other side get it.

Even the Liberal plan that has been put forward of \$5 billion over five years will not even come close to what is required if we are truly offering parents a choice about what needs to happen. Quebec alone spends \$1.3 billion a year on its child care system and that system has most often been held up as the working model, something that is actually working in the country, that is affordable, accessible and is based on a not for profit delivery system. That is a \$7 a day model. That is \$1.3 billion a year in one province and yet we have the Liberal government that is talking about \$5 billion over five years, or \$1 billion a year, which will not do it.

•(1650)

I want to go back to the question on use of the word “choice”. We heard earlier that parents must be able to choose. I agree that parents need to have a choice but the way the motion is crafted it takes out of the equation the most important element of what that choice should be, and that is a system that can be created by the federal government through a system of social investment.

I was at the meeting in Vancouver talking with child care advocates across the country who had gathered to hear whatever the announcement was going to be or not from the federal, provincial and territorial ministers who were meeting on Friday on the child care agreement. There was huge disappointment that at this point a deal had not been reached. That is partly because the provinces understand that there is not an adequate federal investment at this point to make the system work.

We in the NDP have been very clear on this issue from day one. I want to pay tribute to my colleague, the member for Sault Ste. Marie, who has done an incredible job of travelling across the country since he became elected as a member of Parliament last year. He met with people on the ground, with child care advocates, with provincial representatives and with government officials in various provinces. He has done more than anyone in this place to actually put together the kind of program and objectives that need to be established to ensure there are choices for parents.

I guess it is pretty clear by now, from the speeches that we have heard today, that the NDP cannot in any way support the motion that has been put forward by the Conservative Party. The reason we cannot support the motion is that it is the antithesis of what actually needs to be done to create choices and to create a child care system in this country.

In 1967, 17% of mothers were working. Today that figure is at 70%. In most families both parents are working and yet we know that there is only a capacity of 15% of licensed spaces and 40% of that 15% is actually in the province of Quebec.

### *Supply*

If we were to ask working parents what their best choice or best model would be, I know some parents would say that they would rather be at home. However for many families that is not an economic choice. Some families might say that they want an in-home licensed day care program in their neighbourhood. Some families do make that choice but, by far, the vast majority of parents want to have the assurance that there is a quality program that is licensed, regulated and driven by objectives that are based on not creating a profit for some operator. For example, a corporation in Australia now has a 20% market share. It sees child care as a business and as market opportunity.

We have to do everything we can to ensure that we do not go down that road because we are talking about the health and well-being of children. We are talking about early childhood development. We are talking about having qualified and committed individuals working in that system where the bottom line is not how low the wages can be made. As it is today, child care workers are paid less than zookeepers. That is how much we value our kids.

All of this tells us that we are crying out for a system that is based on public policy objectives and on what is best for children, not the private operators, not for racing to the bottom line and not for paying the lowest wages possible. We need a system that will provide child care centres in locations that are accessible to parents, that involve parents and that are community based.

•(1655)

I find the motion from the Conservative Party to be off base. I feel those members do not get it. The fact that they brought the motion forward today shows that they realize there is a great groundswell of public opinion and eagerness out there for this kind of major investment. In some ways, those members are trying to jump on the bandwagon but they are doing it with a very narrow perspective. It is all about tax cuts.

For all of those reasons the motion is not worth the paper it is written on. It would not establish the kind of child care system that we need in Canada.

However, since we are having this debate today in the House about the child care system, let us send a clear message to the federal government as well. It has had 13 budgets to get this right. We have heard many promises from the Liberal government, going back to the 1993 Liberal red book. The finance minister has failed many times to deliver on the promise of a national child care program.

We are a week away from another budget and it is truly disappointing to see that we have not moved very far at all. The Liberal government is leaving the door wide open for profit operators. It will be a patchwork system right across the country.

When the ministers came out of their meeting in Vancouver on Friday, they made it very clear that they expected to see something different in every province. This goes against the grain of what Canadians want to see in terms of an accessible, affordable, quality model that is inclusive and based on universality.

### Supply

The Liberals themselves have a lot to answer for in the way they have handled this issue. I feel a sense of frustration and disillusionment because we are now a week before the budget and we still do not know whether we will have a child care system that will be sustainable. We have no sense of whether a child care system will be developed where the principles of quality, universality, accessibility and educational development will be enshrined in a legislative framework. Is that not the most important thing we could do?

Many times Liberal budgets have thrown billions of dollars at something without creating the public policy objectives and principles. It is unfortunate that we are now at this point where a lot of promises and commitments have been made but we still do not have the system that we need.

I remember the days when I took my son to the day care centre. I think what is important to most working families is being able to rely on a quality day care centre where their kids will be safe and their needs will be met. We expect that in our educational system because our education system benefits all society. When a child goes to kindergarten or grade one or grade five or whatever, we know there will be a basic standard of quality. With a system of early childhood development, the principles should be no different, and that is what we need to focus on.

I challenge the members of the Conservative Party to answer this question. How will the motion before us today create the reliable, on the ground system that is so desperately needed? The motion is nothing more than a further reiteration of what we already know. The Conservatives want to see a massive system of tax cuts where people who are the most vulnerable, families on the lowest income with the least amount of choices and the least amount of resources, will not be able to provide their children with a quality education.

• (1700)

NDP members will not be supporting this motion. We will be continuing with our proposal to ensure there is legislation and provincial accountability for that system. We will be continuing with our proposal, which I think is advocated by most organizations across the country that have been involved in this field, that it be based on a not for profit system that is focused on the needs and well-being of children.

That is what we will continue to push. We will not be voting for this motion. We will continue to hold the Liberal government to account, to follow through on its commitments to produce such a system. It has to be more than \$5 billion, and it has to be something that can be sustained over the long term.

**Ms. Bev Oda (Durham, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the availability and quality of child care across the country varies not only from province to province but from region to region, and even in my riding which has a mix of urban and rural settings. Most of my riding's urban settings are closer to the lake and the 401. However, in the northern part of my riding there are smaller towns and villages that are separated by miles. Although each of these communities has newer subdivisions going up each month, it will be years before many of them reach the critical mass needed to support larger well resourced day care centres.

In large ridings such as mine, distances become a challenge and consequently transportation to and from centres is and will continue to be a major hindrance. Also, 25% of my riding's population base is in the rural area. To serve the unique needs of this community, for example, local families in Uxbridge have had to organize a program specifically to meet the needs of the rural settings.

Durham Farm and Rural Family Resources has been offering child care for farm families since 1988. The programs are specially designed to meet the needs of part time care needed in the peak farming seasons. This means the children do not have to be taken from the home but can still stay on the family farm.

For the most part many of these rural families have been caring for their children within the family or extended family with the help of neighbours, friends and family. Generations have grown and thrived in a child centred way of life.

I also know that many families in more urban centres have chosen to sacrifice the additional income and have one parent stay at home to raise their children. A national child care program directed at out of the home day care centres does not necessarily meet these families' needs. If we take all of the dollars that the Liberal government plans to set aside for day care and make them directly available to parents, these moms and dads could then choose what is best for their children and families in whatever settings they choose to live.

I am wondering if the member could address the special needs of the smaller rural communities and the farm families.

• (1705)

**Ms. Libby Davies:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has raised some very important issues.

The problem I have is that I am wondering what it is in the motion before us today that would actually address those questions. They are valid questions, but there is nothing in the motion from the Conservative Party that would actually create any kind of infrastructure or community resources that are necessary to meet the needs of those smaller communities. The member might want to direct her questions and comments to whoever it was in her party who crafted this motion.

There are huge differences between urban needs and rural needs. Eighty per cent of Canadians live in the urban environment. We need to have an infrastructure of community based family and child care centres. We need to have a system that extends into smaller communities. It is simply not an option for most families, especially if both parents are working, to be able to stay at home to raise their children during the work day.

I can only say in response that the member has raised some very important questions, but unfortunately her party's motion will not address any of those concerns.

**Hon. Keith Martin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I cannot believe the NDP's obsession against the private sector and profit making. If it were not for people and companies paying taxes, that member and everyone in the House would not have a job. There would not be the money to pay for the House and what we try to do for our country. The NDP needs to get off that topic.

There is a way to address the matter at hand which is how to ensure that children have their basic needs met and how do we ensure there are good outcomes and that we address a wide variety of social problems. There is a body of evidence over 25 years to show that the head start program for kids which basically teaches parents good parenting skills works very well. It enables parents to learn adequate parenting skills. It cuts across socio-economic grounds. It does not affect only the poor or the rich; it is a matter of parenting.

When parents are enabled to have those skills, it reduces youth crime by over 50%, teen pregnancies drop 60%, kids stay in school a lot longer and their education levels go up. Actually for \$1 invested a \$7 output is received at the end of the day.

Another thing we could do is improve our tax system to make it equitable for parents who stay at home and parents who go to work. If we could stabilize the tax system it would work well.

Would the member find it acceptable to have a compromise where we invest in a targeted day care program for single parents, students, people who do not have very much money but need the day care in combination with an early learning program which ensures that the basic needs of kids are met and parents have good parenting skills? It would cut across socio-economic grounds. Would the member find that to be a better and affordable solution that would enable us to address the wide variety of social problems that I have just spoken about?

• (1710)

**Ms. Libby Davies:** Mr. Speaker, I know that the member has been a strong proponent of the head start programs. At one point he had a motion in the House which actually was approved. I have also very strongly supported the head start programs. I might add they have been based on not for profit community based delivery.

His criticism is that somehow we are obsessed with the concern about for profit delivery. It is a very real problem that we are going to face if this system is left open. Do we really want large corporations running our child care centres where it would be based on a bottom line delivery? I do not think so.

In fact the head start model is a good model to begin from. However, I really do not want to see a system that is targeted only to the needs of low income parents, single parent families, or families that are at risk. Their needs are very critical and must be addressed, but the whole point surely even from other members of the hon. member's party is to create a universal system. It is to create a system that has broad accessibility for all kinds of families, including families where both parents work, which is a very large component.

Ask any family where both parents are working what it is that stresses them out every day. Most often the reply is that they cannot find the kind of quality child care that they need.

It seems to me that the priority is to create that universality which is widely accessible. We do not want a system that is so narrowly focused it is not inclusive. I have heard Liberal members and the minister talk about the importance of those principles. I am not sure why the member wants to make it much more narrow than what I have even heard the government speak about.

**Mr. Jeremy Harrison (Desnethé—Mississippi—Churchill River, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this morning at the aboriginal affairs

### Supply

committee we heard very moving testimony from survivors of Indian residential schools. This was a situation where the government took children from their parents knowing better than their parents how to raise them. The government put the children in schools and did not allow their parents to have any say in how they were raised, and we wonder why there was a tragedy.

We see the members of the NDP, members of the sanctimonious, holier than thou party standing up and saying, "Let the government take our children away again. Government knows best. Government knows how to raise our children better than we do ourselves". They say that is a great idea.

We have seen what happened already with this. They are completely insensitive comments from the NDP. I cannot believe it.

**Ms. Libby Davies:** Mr. Speaker, I represent a riding where there are many survivors of residential schools, second and third generation. I know the horror of what took place.

To suggest that establishing child care means that the government will be snatching children from their parents is a bit absurd. What is the Conservative Party or the member suggesting? Is he suggesting that we dismantle the public education system as well because the government is snatching children from their parents? I do not think anyone is speaking in those terms. I think that the member has gone a little off track.

• (1715)

[Translation]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx):** It being 5:15 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

[English]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx):** The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx):** All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx):** All those opposed will please say nay.

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx):** In my opinion the nays have it.

*And more than five members having risen:*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx):** Call in the members.

• (1750)

(The House divided on the motion, which was negated on the following division:)

*Supply**(Division No. 35)***YEAS**

## Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Allison	Ambrose
Anders	Batters
Benoit	Bezan
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Carrie
Casey	Casson
Chatters	Chong
Cummins	Day
Devolin	Doyle
Duncan	Epp
Finley	Fitzpatrick
Fletcher	Forseth
Gallant	Goodyear
Gouk	Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells)
Guergis	Hanger
Harper	Harris
Harrison	Hearn
Hiebert	Hill
Hinton	Jaffer
Jean	Johnston
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lauzon	Lukiwski
Lunn	Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Menzies	Merrifield
Miller	Mills
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Nicholson	O'Brien
O'Connor	Obhrai
Oda	Penson
Poillievre	Prentice
Preston	Rajotte
Reid	Reynolds
Richardson	Ritz
Scheer	Schellenberger
Schmidt (Kelowna—Lake Country)	Skelton
Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul)	Solberg
Sorenson	Steckle
Strahl	Stronach
Szabo	Telegdi
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)	Thompson (Wild Rose)
Tilson	Toews
Trost	Tweed
Ur	Van Loan
Vellacott	Warawa
Watson	White
Williams	Yelich— 96

**NAYS**

## Members

Adams	Alcock
Anderson (Victoria)	André
Angus	Augustine
Bachand	Bagnell
Bains	Bakopanos
Barnes	Beaumier
Bélangier	Bell
Bellavance	Bennett
Bergeron	Bevilacqua
Bigras	Blaikie
Blais	Blondin-Andrew
Boire	Boivin
Bonin	Bonsant
Boshcoff	Bouchard
Boudria	Boulianne
Bourgeois	Bradshaw
Brisson	Broadbent
Brown (Oakville)	Bulte
Cannis	Carr
Carrier	Carroll
Catterall	Chan
Clavet	Cleary
Comartin	Comuzzi
Côté	Cotler

Crête	Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)
Cullen (Etobicoke North)	Cuzner
D'Amours	Davies
Demers	Deschamps
Desjarlais	Desrochers
DeVillers	Dion
Dosanjh	Drouin
Dryden	Duceppe
Easter	Efford
Emerson	Eyking
Faille	Folco
Fontana	Frulla
Fry	Gagnon (Québec)
Gagnon (Saint-Maurice—Champlain)	Gagnon (Jonquière—Alma)
Galloway	Gaudet
Godbout	Godfrey
Godin	Godale
Graham	Guarnieri
Guay	Guimond
Holland	Hubbard
Ianno	Jennings
Julian	Kadis
Karetak-Lindell	Karygiannis
Khan	Koto
Laframboise	Lalonde
Lapierre (Outremont)	Lapierre (Lévis—Bellechasse)
Lastewka	Lavallée
LeBlanc	Lee
Lemay	Lessard
Lévesque	Longfield
Loubier	MacAulay
Macklin	Malhi
Maloney	Marceau
Marleau	Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	Masse
Matthews	McCallum
McDonough	McGuinty
McGuire	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McLellan	McTeague
Ménard (Hochelaga)	Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Minna	Mitchell
Murphy	Myers
Neville	Owen
Pacetti	Paquette
Paradis	Patry
Perron	Peterson
Pettigrew	Phinney
Picard (Drummond)	Plamondon
Poirier-Rivard	Powers
Ratansi	Redman
Regan	Robillard
Rodriguez	Rota
Roy	Saada
Sauvageau	Savage
Savoy	Scarpaleggia
Scott	Sgro
Siksay	Silva
Simard (Beauport—Limoulu)	Simard (Saint Boniface)
Simms	Smith (Pontiac)
St-Hilaire	St. Amand
St. Denis	Stoffer
Temelkovski	Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
Basques)	
Thibault (West Nova)	Tonks
Torsney	Valeri
Valley	Vincent
Volpe	Wappel
Wasylycia-Leis	Wilfert
Wrzesnewskyj— 185	

**PAIRED**

## Members

Asselin	Brunelle
Cardin	Chamberlain
Coderre	Dhalla
Gauthier	Zed— 8

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx):** I declare the motion lost.



*Government Orders*

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE ACT**

The House resumed from February 10 consideration of the motion that Bill C-31, an act to establish the Department of International Trade and to make related amendments to certain acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx):** Pursuant to order made Thursday, February 10, 2005, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-31.

[English]

**Hon. Karen Redman:** Mr. Speaker, if the House would agree, I would propose that you seek unanimous consent that members who voted on the previous motion be recorded as having voted on the motion before the House with Liberal members voting in favour. This would also include the member for Edmonton—Mill Woods—Beaumont.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx):** Is it the pleasure of the House to proceed in this fashion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Hon. Rob Nicholson:** Mr. Speaker, Conservative members will be voting against this motion.

[Translation]

**Mr. Michel Guimond:** Mr. Speaker, the members of the Bloc Québécois are voting against this motion.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Mr. Speaker, the members of the New Democratic Party are voting against this motion.

• (1755)

[English]

(The House divided on the motion, which was negated on the following division:)

*(Division No. 36)*

**YEAS**

Members

Adams	Alcock
Anderson (Victoria)	Augustine
Bagnell	Bains
Bakopanos	Barnes
Beaumier	Bélangier
Bell	Bennett
Bevilacqua	Blondin-Andrew
Boivin	Bonin
Boshcoff	Boudria
Bradshaw	Brisson
Brown (Oakville)	Bulte
Cannis	Carr
Carroll	Catterall
Chan	Comuzzi
Cotler	Cullen (Etobicoke North)
Cuzner	D'Amours
DeVillers	Dion
Dosanjh	Drouin
Dryden	Easter

Efford
Eyking
Fontana
Fry
Godbout
Goodale
Guarnieri
Hubbard
Jennings
Karetak-Lindell
Khan
Lapierre (Outremont)
LeBlanc
Longfield
Macklin
Maloney
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Matthews
McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McTeague
Mitchell
Myers
O'Brien
Pacetti
Patry
Pettigrew
Powers
Redman
Robillard
Rota
Savage
Scarpaleggia
Sgro
Simard (Saint Boniface)
Smith (Pontiac)
St. Denis
Szabo
Temelkovski
Tonks
Ur
Valley
Wappel
Wrzesnewskyj — 125

Emerson
Folco
Frulla
Galloway
Godfrey
Graham
Holland
Ianno
Kadis
Karygiannis
Kilgour
Lastewka
Lee
MacAulay
Malhi
Marleau
Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
McCallum
McGuire
McLellan
Minna
Murphy
Neville
Owen
Paradis
Peterson
Phinney
Ratansi
Regan
Rodriguez
Saada
Savoy
Scott
Silva
Simms
St. Amand
Steckle
Telegdi
Thibault (West Nova)
Torsney
Valeri
Volpe
Wilfert

**NAYS**

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Allison	Ambrose
Anders	André
Angus	Bachand
Batters	Bellavance
Benoit	Bergeron
Bezan	Bigras
Blaikie	Blais
Boire	Bonsant
Bouchard	Boulianne
Bourgeois	Broadbent
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Carrie
Carrier	Casey
Casson	Chatters
Chong	Clavet
Cleary	Comartin
Côté	Crête
Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)	Cummins
Davies	Day
Demers	Deschamps
Desjarlais	Desrochers
Devolin	Doyle
Duceppe	Duncan
Epp	Faille
Finley	Fitzpatrick
Fletcher	Forsyth
Gagnon (Québec)	Gagnon (Saint-Maurice—Champlain)
Gagnon (Jonquière—Alma)	Gallant
Gaudet	Godin
Goodyear	Gouk
Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells)	Guay
Guergis	Guimond
Hanger	Harper
Harris	Harrison
Hearn	Hiebert

*Government Orders*

Hill	Hinton
Jaffer	Jean
Johnston	Julian
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Komarnicki	Kotto
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lafambe
Lalonde	Lapierre (Lévis—Bellechasse)
Lauzon	Lavallée
Lemay	Lessard
Lévesque	Loubier
Lukiwski	Lunn
Lunney	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Marceau
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Masse	McDonough
Ménard (Hochelaga)	Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Menzies	Merrifield
Miller	Mills
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Nicholson	O'Connor
Obhrai	Oda
Paquette	Penson
Perron	Picard (Drummond)
Plamondon	Poilievre
Poirier-Rivard	Prentice
Preston	Rajotte
Reid	Reynolds
Richardson	Ritz
Roy	Sauvageau
Scheer	Schellenberger
Schmidt (Kelowna—Lake Country)	Siksay
Simard (Beauport—Limoilou)	Skelton
Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul)	Solberg
Sorenson	St-Hilaire
Stoffer	Strahl
Stronach	Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
Basques)	
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)	Thompson (Wild Rose)
Tilson	Toews
Trost	Tweed
Van Loan	Vellacott
Vincent	Warawa
Wasylcia-Leis	Watson
White	Williams
Yelich — 157	

**PAIRED**

## Members

Asselin	Brunelle
Cardin	Chamberlain
Coderre	Dhalla
Gauthier	Zed — 8

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx):** I declare the motion lost.

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**FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL ARRANGEMENTS ACT**

The House resumed from February 14 consideration of the motion that Bill C-24, an act to amend the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act and to make consequential amendments to other acts (fiscal equalization payments to the provinces and funding to the territories), be read the third time and passed.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx):** The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at third reading stage of Bill C-24.

● (1805)

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

*(Division No. 37)***YEAS**

## Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Adams	Alcock
Allison	Ambrose
Anderson (Victoria)	Angus
Augustine	Bagnell
Bains	Bakopanos
Barnes	Batters
Beaumier	Bélanger
Bell	Bennett
Benoit	Bevilacqua
Bezan	Blaikie
Blondin-Andrew	Boivin
Bonin	Boshcoff
Boudria	Bradshaw
Brison	Broadbent
Brown (Oakville)	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Bulte	Cannis
Carr	Carrie
Carroll	Casey
Casson	Catterall
Chan	Chatters
Chong	Comartin
Comuzzi	Cotler
Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)	Cullen (Etobicoke North)
Cummins	Cuzner
D'Amours	Davies
Day	Desjarlais
DeVillers	Devolin
Dion	Dosanjh
Doyle	Drouin
Dryden	Duncan
Easter	Efford
Emerson	Epp
Eyking	Finley
Fitzpatrick	Fletcher
Folco	Fontana
Forseth	Frulla
Fry	Gallant
Galloway	Godbout
Godfrey	Godin
Goodale	Goodyear
Gouk	Graham
Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells)	Guarnieri
Guergis	Hanger
Harper	Harris
Harrison	Hearn
Hill	Hinton
Holland	Hubbard
Ianno	Jaffer
Jean	Jennings
Johnston	Julian
Kadis	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Karetak-Lindell	Karygiannis
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Khan
Kilgour	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lapierre (Outremont)
Lastewka	Lauzon
LeBlanc	Lee
Longfield	Lukiwski
Lunn	Lunney
MacAulay	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Macklin
Malhi	Maloney
Marleau	Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	Masse
Matthews	McCallum
McDonough	McGuinty
McGuire	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McLellan	McTeague
Menzies	Merrifield
Miller	Mills
Minna	Mitchell
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Murphy	Myers
Neville	Nicholson
O'Brien	O'Connor

## Government Orders

Obhrai	Oda
Owen	Pacetti
Paradis	Patry
Penson	Peterson
Pettigrew	Phinney
Poilievre	Powers
Prentice	Preston
Rajotte	Ratansi
Redman	Regan
Reid	Reynolds
Richardson	Ritz
Robillard	Rodriguez
Rota	Saada
Savage	Savoy
Scarpaleggia	Scheer
Schellenberger	Schmidt (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Scott	Sgro
Siksay	Silva
Simard (Saint Boniface)	Simms
Skelton	Smith (Pontiac)
Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul)	Solberg
Sorenson	St. Amand
St. Denis	Steckle
Stoffer	Stronach
Szabo	Telegdi
Temelkovski	Thibault (West Nova)
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)	Thompson (Wild Rose)
Tilson	Toews
Tonks	Torsney
Trost	Tweed
Ur	Valeri
Valley	Van Loan
Vellacott	Volpe
Wappel	Warawa
Wasylycia-Leis	Watson
White	Wilfert
Williams	Wrzesnewskyj
Yelich — 229	

## NAYS

## Members

André	Bachand
Bellavance	Bergeron
Bigras	Blais
Boire	Bonsant
Bouchard	Boulianne
Bourgeois	Carrier
Clavet	Cleary
Côté	Crête
Demers	Deschamps
Desrochers	Duceppe
Faillon	Gagnon (Québec)
Gagnon (Saint-Maurice—Champlain)	Gagnon (Jonquière—Alma)
Gaudet	Guay
Guimond	Kotto
Laframboise	Lalonde
Lapierre (Lévis—Bellechasse)	Lavallée
Lemay	Lessard
Lévesque	Loubier
Marceau	Ménard (Hochelaga)
Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)	Paquette
Perron	Picard (Drummond)
Plamondon	Poirier-Rivard
Roy	Sauvageau
Simard (Beauport—Limoilou)	St-Hilaire
Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)	
Vincent — 50	

## PAIRED

## Members

Asselin	Brunelle
Cardin	Chamberlain
Coderre	Dhalla
Gauthier	Zed — 8

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx):** I declare the motion carried.

(Bill read the third time and passed)

[Translation]

## DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS ACT

The House resumed from February 14 consideration of the motion that Bill C-32, an act to amend the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx):** The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-32.

[English]

**Hon. Karen Redman:** Mr. Speaker, if the House would agree, I would propose that you seek unanimous consent that the members who voted on the previous motion be recorded as having voted on the motion now before the House, with Liberals voting in favour.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx):** Is it the pleasure of the House to proceed in this fashion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Hon. Rob Nicholson:** Mr. Speaker, on Bill C-32 members of the Conservative Party will vote against the motion.

• (1810)

[Translation]

**Mr. Michel Guimond:** Mr. Speaker, the members of the Bloc Québécois are voting against this motion.

[English]

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Mr. Speaker, members of the NDP are voting no to this motion.

[Translation]

(The House divided on the motion, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 38)

## YEAS

## Members

Adams	Alcock
Anderson (Victoria)	Augustine
Bagnell	Bains
Bakopanos	Barnes
Beaumier	Bélanger
Bell	Bennett
Bevilacqua	Blondin-Andrew
Boivin	Bonin
Boshcoff	Boudria
Bradshaw	Brisson
Brown (Oakville)	Bulte
Canniss	Carr
Carroll	Catterall
Chan	Comuzzi
Cotler	Cullen (Etobicoke North)
Cuzner	D'Amours
DeVillers	Dion
Dosanjh	Drouin
Dryden	Easter
Efford	Emerson
Eyking	Folco
Fontana	Frulla
Fry	Galloway
Godbout	Godfrey
Goodale	Graham
Guarnieri	Holland
Hubbard	Ianno
Jennings	Kadis

*Private Members' Business*

Karetak-Lindell  
Khan  
Lapierre (Outremont)  
LeBlanc  
Longfield  
Macklin  
Maloney  
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)  
Matthews  
McGuinty  
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)  
McTeague  
Mitchell  
Myers  
O'Brien  
Pacetti  
Patry  
Pettigrew  
Powers  
Redman  
Robillard  
Rota  
Savage  
Scarpaleggia  
Sgro  
Simard (Saint Boniface)  
Smith (Pontiac)  
St. Denis  
Szabo  
Temelkovski  
Tonks  
Ur  
Valley  
Wappel  
Wrzesniewski — 125

Karygiannis  
Kilgour  
Lastewka  
Lee  
MacAulay  
Malhi  
Marleau  
Martin (LaSalle—Émard)  
McCallum  
McGuire  
McLellan  
Minna  
Murphy  
Neville  
Owen  
Paradis  
Peterson  
Phinney  
Ratansi  
Regan  
Rodriguez  
Saada  
Savoy  
Scott  
Silva  
Simms  
St. Amand  
Steckle  
Telegdi  
Thibault (West Nova)  
Torsney  
Valeri  
Volpe  
Wilfert

Lukiwski  
Lunney  
MacKenzie  
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)  
Masse  
Ménard (Hochelega)  
Menzies  
Miller  
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)  
Moore (Fundy Royal)  
Nicholson  
Obhrai  
Paquette  
Perron  
Plamondon  
Poirier-Rivard  
Preston  
Reid  
Richardson  
Roy  
Scheer  
Schmidt (Kelowna—Lake Country)  
Simard (Beauport—Limoulu)  
Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul)  
Sorenson  
Stoffér  
Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)  
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)  
Thompson (Wild Rose)  
Toews  
Tweed  
Vellacott  
Warawa  
Watson  
Williams  
Lunn  
MacKay (Central Nova)  
Marceau  
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)  
McDonough  
Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)  
Merrifield  
Mills  
O'Connor  
Oda  
Penson  
Picard (Drummond)  
Poilievre  
Prentice  
Rajotte  
Reynolds  
Ritz  
Sauvageau  
Schellenberger  
Siksay  
Skelton  
Solberg  
St-Hilaire  
Stronach  
Tilson  
Trost  
Van Loan  
Vincent  
Wasylycia-Leis  
White  
Yelich — 154

**NAYS**

## Members

Abbott  
Allison  
André  
Bachand  
Bellavance  
Bergeron  
Bigras  
Blais  
Bonsant  
Boulianne  
Broadbent  
Carrie  
Casey  
Chatters  
Clavet  
Comartin  
Crête  
Cummins  
Day  
Deschamps  
Desrochers  
Doyle  
Duncan  
Faille  
Fitzpatrick  
Forseth  
Gagnon (Saint-Maurice—Champlain)  
Gallant  
Godin  
Gouk  
Guay  
Guimond  
Harper  
Harrison  
Hill  
Jaffer  
Johnston  
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)  
Komarnicki  
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)  
Lalonde  
Lauzon  
Lemay  
Lévesque

Ablonczy  
Ambrose  
Angus  
Batters  
Benoit  
Bezan  
Blaikie  
Boire  
Bouchard  
Bourgeois  
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)  
Carrier  
Casson  
Chong  
Cleary  
Côté  
Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)  
Davies  
Demers  
Desjarlais  
Devolin  
Duceppe  
Epp  
Finley  
Fletcher  
Gagnon (Québec)  
Gagnon (Jonquière—Alma)  
Gaudet  
Goodyear  
Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells)  
Guergis  
Hanger  
Harris  
Hearn  
Hinton  
Jean  
Julian  
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)  
Kotto  
Laframboise  
Lapierre (Lévis—Bellechasse)  
Lavallée  
Lessard  
Loubier

**PAIRED**

## Members

Asselin  
Cardin  
Coderre  
Gauthier  
Brunelle  
Chamberlain  
Dhalla  
Zed — 8

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx):** I declare the motion lost.

It being 6:15 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

● (1815)

[English]

**CONSTITUTION AMENDMENT, 2005**

**Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, CPC) moved:**

Motion No. 194

the Power of the Queen in Council under section 56 of the Constitution Act, 1867, to disallow Acts of the Parliament of Canada is not compatible with Canada's status as a Sovereign State, and has therefore fallen into Desuetude;

WHEREAS the Power of the Queen in Council under section 57 of the Constitution Act, 1867, to deny Assent to Bills of the Parliament of Canada is not compatible with Canada's status as a Sovereign State or with the direct Relationship between the Queen, the Parliament of Canada, and the Queen's Canadian Ministers that exists under the terms of the Statute of Westminster, 1931, and has therefore fallen into Desuetude;

AND WHEREAS the Power of the Governor General under section 90 of the Constitution Act, 1867, to disallow Acts of the Legislatures of the several Provinces and the power of the Lieutenant Governors of the Provinces to reserve Bills of the legislatures of the several provinces for the signification by the Governor General of the Queen's Pleasure are powers that are not compatible with the political maturity that has been attained by the Provinces of Canada, and have therefore fallen into Desuetude;

NOW, THEREFORE, the House of Commons resolves that Her Excellency the Governor General be authorized to issue a proclamation under the Great Seal of Canada in accordance with the schedule hereto:

SCHEDULE

AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION OF CANADA

1. The Constitution Act, 1867, is amended by deleting section 56.
2. The Constitution Act, 1867, is amended in section 57 by deleting the following words: "in Council".
3. (1) The Constitution Act, 1867, is amended in section 90 by deleting the following words: "the Disallowance of Acts, and the Signification of Pleasure on Bills reserved,".
- 2) The Constitution Act, 1867, is amended in section 90 by deleting the following words: "and for a Secretary of State, of One Year for Two Years,".
4. This amendment may be cited as the Constitution Amendment, 2005 (Disallowance and Reservation) and a reference to the Constitution Acts, 1867 to 1982, shall be deemed to include a reference to the Constitution Amendment, 2005 (Disallowance and Reservation).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on the 40th anniversary of the adoption of Canada's maple leaf flag to move a resolution to authorize Her Excellency the Governor General to issue a proclamation to amend the Constitution under section 41 of the Constitution Act, 1982. The amendments that I propose today would drop the final vestiges of colonialism from our Constitution under which Canada is still technically a self-governing British colony rather than a mature and independent state.

This resolution will, moreover, end the antiquated power of the federal cabinet to treat Canada's provinces as if they were self-governing colonies of Ottawa.

The amendments that I am proposing today to the Constitution of Canada will, if adopted by the Parliament of Canada and the legislatures of each of the provinces, have the effect of simultaneously marking Canada's full emergence into national independence and the final accession of Canada's provinces to the status of mature and fully self-governing states with the same formal status and independence that has been enjoyed for many years by the states of Australia and the United States, and by the cantons of Switzerland.

[*Translation*]

More precisely, the resolution being submitted to the House today would modify three provisions of the Constitution of Canada.

First of all, section 56 of the Constitution Act, 1867, would be deleted. This is an archaic provision which allows the British Cabinet to disallow acts of the Parliament of Canada within two years of their enactment.

Second, section 57 of the Constitution Act, 1867, would be amended to do away with the power of the Governor General to set aside or "reserve" bills enacted by both Houses of Parliament, so that they may not become law until assented to by the British Cabinet.

*Private Members' Business*

Finally, section 90 of the Constitution Act, 1867 would be amended in order to do away with the power of the federal cabinet to disallow acts of the provincial legislatures and to study bills for which royal assent has been reserved for that purpose by the Lieutenant Governor of a province.

The idea of abolishing these powers is nothing new. A series of constitutional reforms 35 years ago, known as the Victoria charter, included a provision aimed at doing away with these powers of disallowance and reservation. That Victoria charter was supported by the Trudeau government and all provincial premiers. It was, however, eventually rejected when Quebec premier Robert Bourassa withdrew his support for reasons that have nothing to do with the powers we are discussing today.

Thirteen years ago, there was another proposal to eliminate these powers of disallowance and reservation in the Charlottetown accord. In the end, the people of Canada rejected that accord, but once again the imposing series of constitutional reforms was endorsed for reasons having nothing to do with those powers.

In recent decades, then, abolition of the powers of disallowance and reservation has been raised by the Government of Canada on two occasions. Each time all provincial premiers were unanimous in their approval. Then, each time, it ended up out of the constitutional program because it was part of an ambitious series of reforms that could not be given universal assent.

• (1820)

[*English*]

It is in recognition of this historical fact that I propose with the resolution before the House today to return to the pattern of constitutional debate which prevailed in Canada prior to the omnibus packages at Meech Lake, Charlottetown and Victoria. Resolution M-194 and the amendments that it proposes will stand or fall on their own merits, and not as part of a larger constitutional package.

This is the way constitutional amendments are done in the world's other great federations: in Australia, Switzerland and the United States. In these countries each potential amendment is considered on its own merits rather than as part of a packaged deal. Horse-trading plays no role in the ratification process and as a result the process of amending the Constitution is characterized by a distinct absence of the threats of national catastrophe that have been all too common in Canadian constitutional debates.

It is in the same spirit of modesty and reserve that minimalist language has been used in drafting the amendments under consideration today. The amendments have been drafted to strip away as few words as possible from the existing text of sections 56, 57 and 90 of the Constitution Act, 1867, and no words at all have been added to the Constitution, thus preserving untouched key institutions of Canadian life such as the Governor General and the Monarchy.

The two prior attempts in 1970 and 1992 at amending these sections have been somewhat more ambitious. The Charlottetown accord, for example, rewrites section 90 using gender neutral language, but the goal this time around is to make no changes at all to the Constitution except those that are absolutely unavoidable.

*Private Members' Business*

It may seem strange to Canadians that our Constitution could ever have been written to contain provisions making this country a self-governing colony rather than a sovereign state, and to seriously compromise the independence of our provinces. It is certainly true that none of the other three federations that I have mentioned gives the central government powers of disallowance over the laws of its states or cantons. But a generous regard for the wisdom of the Fathers of Confederation causes me to observe that the world of 1864 and 1865 in which they drafted and debated this country's Constitution was a much different place than it is today.

In the mid-1860s democracy and liberty worldwide were much more tenuous than they are today. The most egregious abuses of human liberty, including human slavery, were widespread. Democracy and the rights and freedoms which were the birthright of British subjects seemed to be very delicate blossoms indeed. When the Fathers of Confederation met in Quebec City and London to negotiate our Constitution, there was only a single stable democratic state in the entire world, and that was the United Kingdom.

There was at that time no Supreme Court of Canada, no Charter of Rights and no united conventions on human rights. Slavery had been abolished in the British colonies only 30 years earlier over considerable local opposition, and such recent developments as the creation of a vast new republic on the North American continent dedicated to the preservation and expansion of slavery made it reasonable to presume that basic liberties would require extraordinary protections, administered directly by the imperial government in London.

Thus, there was widespread agreement at the time that the rights of Canadians could be best guaranteed by granting the government in London the right to strike down Canadian laws, and by giving the new government in Ottawa the power to do the same with provincial laws.

As well, federalism itself was a new experiment within the British Empire. In the absence of a clearly delineated court of appeal to rule on jurisdictional disputes between the Dominion and the provinces, a power of disallowance seemed like a practical, if awkward, means of resolving such disputes.

The imperial power of disallowance and reservation over acts and bills of the Parliament of Canada seems to have worked more or less the way it was intended. Only one act of Parliament, the Oaths Act of 1873, was ever disallowed by the British cabinet, and the final occasion on which a Governor General exercised the power of reservation on a Dominion bill was in 1886. After this, the imperial powers gradually faded into disuse and their active use was disavowed by the British Parliament in 1931, by means of the Statute of Westminster.

From the very beginning, however, there were concerns that the federal power of disallowance and reservation over provincial laws were too broad, that unlike the imperial power of disallowance, they would be exercised at the behest of politicians who were active participants, rather than impartial observers, in the Canadian political scene, and that as a result these powers might be used erratically with either a regional bias or a partisan component.

Both these fears turned out to be valid. The federal power of disallowance was used 112 times between 1867 and its final use in 1943: 10 times to overturn acts of the legislatures of maritime provinces, 16 times to overturn acts adopted by the legislatures of Ontario and Quebec and 86 times to overturn acts passed by legislatures in the four western provinces.

● (1825)

There is an almost exact inverse ratio between the population and political weight of the province in question and the likelihood that its laws would be overturned by the federal cabinet. Moreover, the greater the partisan distinction between the government in Ottawa at any given time and the party in power in the province, the greater the possibility that the laws of that province would be challenged. Hence, the laws of British Columbia were a favourite target when B.C. had a non-partisan government prior to 1900.

The final occasion on which disallowance was seriously considered by a government in Ottawa was in 1945 when the Liberal government of Mackenzie King was only prevented from overturning the entire legislative agenda of Saskatchewan's new CCF government by an aggressive petition and letter-writing campaign coordinated by Premier Tommy Douglas, who had learned his lesson about how to fight back while watching the federal government annul one statute after another next door in Alberta between 1937 and 1943.

The most striking example of the willingness of federal governments to act arbitrarily and inconsistently came in 1937 when the federal minister of justice, Ernest Lapointe, acted promptly to strike down a series of Alberta statutes after refusing to disallow Quebec's notorious Padlock Law, under which the government of Premier Maurice Duplessis had given itself draconian powers to silence its opponents.

This double standard prompted Eugene Forsey to write the following in the June 1938 edition of *The Canadian Forum*, "It took less than one day's consideration for the Minister to recommend disallowance of the Alberta Acts, without any petition from anyone, and just one day for the government to offer a reference of the same Acts to the Supreme Court. In the case of the Padlock Act, nearly fourteen months have elapsed since the Act was assented to...more than eight months since the first request for disallowance; nearly four months since the first formal petition, six weeks since the hearing of counsel in support of the petition".

[*Translation*]

If the episode is so shocking, it may be due to the following reason: less than one year after these events, this legislation in both Quebec and Alberta was struck down by the Supreme Court of Canada, which declared it to be *ultra vires*, meaning outside the legal jurisdiction accorded the provincial legislatures by the Canadian Constitution.

Canada had matured a great deal since 1867 and had established a Supreme Court with competent and enlightened judges to rule on such disputes over jurisdiction, which corresponded exactly to the demands of the provincial premiers at the Interprovincial Conference in 1887, in place of the federal powers of disallowance and reservation. It was clear from 1940 on that disputes over jurisdiction could be resolved without the power of disallowance.

Despite this, even if the federal government had a terrible record when it came to defending civil liberties against abuses by provincial government, there was always a valid reason to preserve the powers of disallowance and reservation as the means with which to strike down any provincial legislation violating fundamental human rights.

After the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, it was suggested that the power to revoke be used to strike down any provincial legislation that would contravene this fundamental legislation.

• (1830)

[*English*]

As late as 1960 it was suggested the federal government should consider using the power of disallowance to strike down any provincial laws that violated John Diefenbaker's new Bill of Rights, thereby unilaterally imposing a sort of national standard in human rights upon the provinces, even though the Bill of Rights was a federal law that placed no restrictions on provincial actions, but the 1960s were an era of change.

In 1965 Pierre Trudeau circulated a paper in which he made the following proposal, "A Bill of Rights could be incorporated into the constitution, to limit the powers that legal authorities have over human rights in Canada. In addition to protecting traditional political and social rights, such a bill would specifically put the French and English languages on an equal basis before the law. The protection of basic rights having thus been ensured, there would be no danger in reducing the central government's predominance in certain areas (for example, by abolishing the right of reservation and disallowance)..."

It was this proposal that was incorporated into the Victoria charter five years later, and that the Trudeau government attempted once more in 1978 with its constitutional amendment bill. It was really only by oversight that the package of amendments that were enacted in 1982 did not include the termination of these powers, which now served no useful purpose at all.

The inclusion of the powers of disallowance and reservation in the Charlottetown accord in 1992 was regarded as a matter of constitutional housekeeping and was completely non-controversial. Even the Reform Party, which had strongly opposed the Charlottetown accord, shortly thereafter added the removal of the powers of disallowance and reservation to its policy statement.

There is still a lively debate in Canadian academic circles as to whether the powers of disallowance and reservation are now dead from disuse or merely dormant. If the former is true, then on today of all days we should recognize that our Constitution is as important a symbol as our flag and dispense with these tokens of our colonial past. If it is the latter which is true, then these remain dangerous powers which are opposed by all shades of respectable opinion and they should be done away with.

Canada is as proud and independent a country as any in the world and Canada's provinces are as mature as any state anywhere. Let us make our Constitution reflect those facts.

**Mr. Ken Epp (Edmonton—Sherwood Park, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I admire my colleague for taking this on and it is fitting since today is the anniversary of the first flight of our Canadian flag.

### *Private Members' Business*

Most of us in our private member's bills hit some little issue somewhere. He said he would propose a motion to actually amend our Constitution and so he is a big thinker.

I would like to express to him though some concerns that I have on a broader scale, and that is the fact that democracy really only works if there are checks and balances. Obviously, this one, having fallen into disuse, and we recognize that our sovereign, the Queen, and jolly old England probably do not have an active role anymore in determining what becomes law in this country.

At the same time though we have a deterioration of that democratic accountability in our own country. The example that came to my mind was the vote that carried quite handily here in the House of Commons in June 1999 in which we agreed that the government would not change the definition of marriage. Yet, in subsequent years, in the short five or six years, we have seen both the courts and the government ignore that vote of Parliament.

I do not know if it is fair to say that they were in contempt of Parliament, but they certainly did make decisions. They violated a vote of Parliament, so there is that accountability factor. On the other hand, what my colleague is proposing to do would not have in any way affected that, at least I do not think so.

I am inclined right now to support the motion and I encourage him. I hope that the members opposite are going to think likewise. I have an idea that the Liberals on command will vote against this because of some reason that they will conjure up in their minds. I would like the member's comments on that.

• (1835)

**Mr. Scott Reid:** Mr. Speaker, I hope that Liberal members will not vote against this. I have a number of reasons to hope that.

One is the fact that prominent Liberals have in the past been very supportive of this. A number of members of the current Liberal caucus were here in 1992 and therefore voted in favour of the Charlottetown accord which included among other things, a removal of the power of disallowance and reservation and a number of prominent Liberals, not the least of them was Pierre Elliott Trudeau, were strongly in favour of getting rid of these powers.

I think that members of all parties have a history of being supportive of this and we should see a consensus on this issue.

**Hon. Paul Harold Macklin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the motion that is put forward today by the hon. member for Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington for the repeal of the constitutional disallowance and reservation powers deals with a matter that, to the best of my knowledge at least, has not been much of a concern or priority for anyone recently.

However, it is a subject that has often been formally, or informally, raised at federal-provincial constitutional reform discussions going back over 100 years. In that sense, it remains a relevant topic for consideration at the appropriate time and in the appropriate context.

*Private Members' Business*

The Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada does not support this motion for a number of reasons. I hope the sponsoring member and all members of the House who have an interest in the continuing of Canadian federalism, as opposed to dismantling of federalism as we know it, will find these reasons compelling.

Indeed, I dare to hope that after hearing these reasons, the hon. member might consider withdrawing his motion. If not, then I hope I can convince our colleagues here in the House, or at least those who believe in our federal system, to vote against it.

To begin with, I think it is safe to say that in modern times no federal government would ever consider exercising these powers, except perhaps in the most extraordinary of circumstances.

As I indicated a moment ago, these powers and their possible repeal or, for that matter, the creation of limitations on these powers or the examination of other alternatives remain a relevant topic for consideration when the time and forum are right. At the moment, there does not appear to be a need for fixing this provision and no observable consensus that we should be dealing with this at this time.

Repeal of these powers might be considered in the context of the development of an integrated and coherent set of proposals for constitutional reform. In such a context, the powers of disallowance and reservation could be considered amongst others dealing with modernizing or generally improving the federal-provincial balance of powers and related matters.

It has not been a part of our constitutional reform tradition up until now for the federal or provincial government to put forward constitutional motions unilaterally without some prior discussion and without some give and take in developing a comprehensive proposal. From the federal perspective there are good reasons for this based primarily on the federal government's concern that it guard and exercise its powers in the interests of all Canadians from a national perspective.

Social, economic, political and other related developments of modern life are often complex and interconnected. These developments have an impact on the constitutional vision that guides our political leaders when proposals are put forward, usually after much consideration, for the constitutional amendment. In addition, progress towards constitutional peace, if not always change, often involves informal understandings in the context of cooperative and practical federalism.

The federal government has never been prepared to acquiesce in the proposed repeal of these powers except in the context of a comprehensive discussion where give and take on all sides leads to a constitutional agreement acceptable to a broad range of Canadians throughout the regions of the country.

Pending such a broader constitutional deal, these powers, unexercised for decades for good political reasons, are hardly a high profile and pressing irritant that require priority repeal, as would eventually follow from the adoption of this motion.

As noted by Mr. Justice La Forest in the 1993 Supreme Court of Canada decision in 3 S.C.R. Ontario Hydro v. Ontario (Labour Relations Board):

The power of disallowance, which had long been in decline, has not been used since 1942...It is the very breadth of these powers that protects against their frequent or inappropriate use. It was not the courts but political forces that dictated their near demise. They are, as was said of the power of disallowance, "delicate" and "difficult" powers to exercise and "will always be considered a harsh exercise of power, unless in cases of great and manifest necessity—

● (1840)

Members can also see in *Severn v. The Queen*, 1878, 2 S.C.R. 70, through Chief Justice Richards at page 96 and Justice Fournier at page 131:

Their inappropriate use will always raise grave political issues, issues that the provincial authorities and the citizenry would be quick to raise. In a word, protection against abuse of these draconian powers is left to the inchoate but very real and effective political forces that undergird federalism.

If we cast our minds back to the mid-1980s and the five conditions put forth by Quebec's then Premier Bourassa for Quebec's acceptance of the Constitution Act in 1982, the repeal of these powers was not one of them. The resulting discussions that led to the Meech Lake accord also did not generate a call for the repeal of these powers.

In the early 1990s an even more ambitious attempt at constitutional reform led to the Charlottetown accord. In that context, such a proposal was balanced by others that maintained and strengthened the equilibrium of the federation and the balance between federal and provincial powers, as well as the protection of the fundamental rights and freedoms of Canadian citizens.

It would be inappropriate and, indeed, unwise for the federal government to support the piecemeal repeal of the powers of disallowance and reservation at the present time without any quid pro quo from the provinces with a view to strengthening the federation and enhancing the protection of the rights and interests of Canadians everywhere.

I see no more logic in a motion to deal with these powers independently than for any other individual item that might appeal to a particular member, constituency or lobby group. In a nutshell, the federal government does not support and does not recommend that we should unilaterally give up any federal powers even if their existence is mainly, if not entirely, historical and theoretical.

I would also note that unlike a bill, the details and technicalities of which would be examined in committee, the adoption of a motion at this time would bar technical analysis and possible improvements.

Constitutional amendments to our federal structure are inherently significant and important, and proposals for such amendments should not be embarked upon in a hasty, ill-timed and ill-considered way. I suggest to hon. members that a motion fast-tracking a constitutional amendment should be contrary to every instinct that we have as legislators. Therefore I would encourage all members not to support the motion.



*Private Members' Business*

•(1845)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères—Les Patriotes, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I listened very closely to the extremely eloquent speech by my learned colleague from Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, who gave a historical overview of the perverse effects of the powers of disallowance and reservation which, in passing, have not been used for many decades, which indicates to most constitutionalists that these powers have literally fallen out of use.

However, our colleague from Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington proposes to eliminate or strike sections 56, 57 and certain provisions in section 90 of the Constitution Act, 1867, so as to make the Constitution of Canada compatible with Canada's status as a sovereign nation.

First, we must say that it is commendable to want to bring a country's constitution in line with its political reality. However, the Bloc Québécois will not be supporting this motion. I will explain shortly the reasons why we will not be doing so.

Obviously, the reasons we will not be supporting this motion are not the same ones mentioned just now by the parliamentary secretary. It is not because I believe in the virtues of Canadian federalism that I shall oppose this motion. Moreover, I thought perhaps that I heard in the parliamentary secretary's opening remarks that there might be a hidden agenda in the government's desire to maintain these powers of disallowance and reservation.

I think I can quote the parliamentary secretary. Of course, I cannot quote his exact words, but he said something of this sort, "we might want to use them in extraordinary circumstances." Beyond the federalist profession of the faith by the parliamentary secretary who says that this is not the right way to go about constitutional reform, I believe I can detect in his remarks that fundamentally, deep in the backs of the minds of the federal government strategists, there are potentially devious intentions with respect to maintaining these powers of disallowance and reservation.

That said, the question we are asking on our side is this: why bother now with a partial, not to say purely cosmetic, amendment of a power that has fallen out of use because it has not been invoked in many decades? Another question came to mind: why not eliminate section 55 of the Constitution, which is in some ways a corollary to sections 56 and 57? Of course, wanting to understand the logic of our colleague from Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, we checked with his office and this is the answer we got "Yes, of course, we want to make certain that the Queen cannot reverse a decision made by the Governor General in giving royal assent to a bill, but we do not want to strike out section 55 and thereby eliminate the link between Canada and the monarchy." And there, there is a contradiction. If, for motives such as preservation or proclamation of Canada's sovereignty, they want to eliminate certain provisions in Canada's Constitution, it is surprising that they want to preserve section 55 because they want to maintain Canada's links with the monarchy.

That leads us to think that there appears to be a purely rhetorical use of the concept of sovereignty as an argument to justify a purely cosmetic constitutional amendment, namely, eliminating the powers

of disallowance and reservation which are currently enshrined in the Constitution of Canada.

For the Bloc Québécois sovereignty is not just a purely rhetorical argument. In that sense, it is absolutely impossible for us to support this motion put forward by the member for Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington.

•(1850)

It is even more embarrassing to us that the constitution of a country is the fundamental pact governing that country. We are simply surprised, as Quebeckers, that this House focusses on cosmetic changes to the Constitution Act, 1867, patriated in 1982, while it does not seem at all concerned by the fact that Quebec is still excluded from the 1982 constitutional agreement. Not only is this a great aberration, but no one anywhere in Canada, and especially in this House, seems to care.

Here they want us to support part of what was the now defunct Charlottetown Accord. I remind my hon. colleague that we, sovereignists, virulently opposed the Charlottetown Accord and so did most Quebeckers. It did not do enough for Quebec. And now they would have us accept just a small part of the defunct Charlottetown Accord? It is absolutely out of the question for the Bloc Québécois to have anything to do with a piecemeal constitutional reform, albeit a purely cosmetic reform, when fundamental aberrations continue to exist.

The Bloc Québécois obviously opposes such an amendment to the Constitution Act of 1982, which Quebec has not ratified. I listened to the hon. member for Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington telling the House how strongly Pierre Elliot Trudeau was in favour of eliminating the power of disallowance and reservation. If he was all that favourable, he might have eliminated these provisions in 1982, when he imposed patriation of the Constitution. But he did not. This argument is purely rhetorical, once again.

If this House wants to bring the Constitution into line with the political reality of this country, Canada, it must do so with the seriousness and rigour it deserves. For us, it is not serious or rigorous to put MPs from the Bloc Québécois through minor, partial, cosmetic changes to this Constitution rejected by Quebec.

If we are to talk about the Constitution in this House, first and foremost, it must be recognized that Quebec is a nation. Need I remind the House that on September 23, 2003, this House rejected a motion to recognize Quebec as a nation. My hon. colleague from Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington was very pleased to vote against that motion that would have recognized Quebec as a nation.

*Private Members' Business*

I also want to remind the House that many of the provinces represented today by the Conservative Party members voted heavily against the Charlottetown Accord, which recognized Quebec's status not as a nation, but simply as a distinct society. It was too much to ask Canada to give Quebec status as a distinct society. We will not even be surprised by the fact that the member for Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington did not want to recognize Quebec's status as a nation, refusing to recognize, thereby, the evidence that Quebec truly is a nation.

Since the House of Commons continues, even today, to deny this obvious reality, that Quebec is a nation, and continues to deny the aspirations of the Quebec people, the Bloc Québécois finds that any constitutional discussions or amendments at this stage are quite futile. The only constitutional amendment we would be prepared to consider would be one seeking to recognize Quebec as a sovereign nation that could eventually be associated, politically and economically, with Canada.

● (1855)

[English]

**Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I must admit that I rise to speak to this motion with mixed feelings. On one hand, I have some sympathy for the member for Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington in his attempt to deal with the issues that arise from those sections in the BNA Act. On the other hand, as we have heard from both the Liberals and the Bloc, I feel that this is not the way to go about making constitutional amendments. I have to indicate that my party supports that sentiment and we will not be supporting the motion.

I want to wear my lawyer's hat for a moment. I have some concerns about whether this motion, if we proceeded with it, is within the exclusive power of this House. We may need to call on a number of constitutional experts to determine that for us. It is not something we can do in this House.

The reality is that even though we would be taking some power away from the federal government were we to proceed with this motion and amend the Constitution accordingly, there is still an issue on the role the provincial governments would play regarding this motion and its effect.

We could say that we are giving up a power, that we are restricting our ability to override provincial legislation. We cannot rule out that there may be some provincial government which, in looking down the road, may say, "At some point maybe we would like the federal government to continue to do that".

I know that is stretching it a bit. It is the reality in terms of what we may end up with at some point. A provincial government may say, "Wait a minute. We do not want the federal government touching any part of the Constitution, including this part, until we approve of it also, or at least approve of it in an amendment formula that is acceptable to the country as a whole, including the provincial government".

The other point we have to make when speaking to this type of an approach is to recognize that this part of the Constitution has been used sparingly over the years. The reservation section which we are

addressing this evening was last used in 1961. It has been nearly 45 years since it was last used. With regard to the disallowance, 1943 was the last time it was used by the federal government.

In addition, the consensus among constitutional experts would be that at this point in time as this has fallen into disuse and there have been so many changes in our constitutional framework, including the passage of the laws in 1982, and the advance of the role of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and the role of the courts to make decisions, all of those advances have rendered these sections no longer constitutionally valid. The end result of this motion if it were to come to fruition would be for naught because these sections no longer apply. They no longer have constitutional validity.

If the federal government attempted to use these sections, I believe our courts, our Supreme Court in particular at this point, would strike the sections down as no longer being valid.

● (1900)

Let me make the additional point that because of what happened in the run up to 1982, the resulting and ongoing concerns by the province of Quebec over amending formulas and changing the BNA Act, and a number of those concerns being shared by other provincial governments, we should not be going anywhere near making amendments, even those that appear, at least on the surface, to be taking power away from the federal government to protect the provinces, even if that is the end result, and I am not entirely convinced it is, we should not be doing this without full involvement and consultation with and the authority of the provincial governments.

It seems to me that if we have learned anything from the 1982 experience it is that we should never go down that road again of making those kinds of decisions where we exclude any significant part of our provincial counterparts.

Based on all those points, it is the position of the NDP that we will not be supporting the motion, that it is simply just not the way to go about constitutional amendment in this country and that it has some very dangerous consequences should we do so.

**Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to rise to support the motion proposed by the member for Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington to abolish the powers of disallowance and reservation.

I have to say that I am quite surprised by the reaction of the other parties. I thought this was something to which they would have responded very positively.

I first want to address the whole issue. My colleague who just spoke and for whom I have a great deal of respect, said that this is not the way to go about amending the Constitution. That was reflected in the Liberal member's comments as well. I find that very surprising because there are really three options.

*Private Members' Business*

One option is to amend it in a macro way, to do what was done in 1982, to do what was tried under the Mulroney government with the Meech Lake and Charlottetown accords. We could put together an omnibus constitutional package and hope the entire country would accept most of it and therefore vote for it, or most of Parliament would vote for it. However, we have seen particularly in reaction to the Charlottetown accord that Canadians are very uncomfortable with that macro way of trying to make constitutional amendments. They would rather deal with things in a more detailed specific way and not have to vote yea or nay on an entire package, some of which they may like and some of which they may not like.

The second alternative is to not do anything. The former prime minister had this reaction. He felt that Canadians were tired of the Constitution so he did not do anything. What was the reaction in not doing anything? The reaction was that unfortunately we almost sleepwalked through a situation in 1995 where the country could possibly have broken up.

Those are the two options used in recent history, either doing things in a massive, macro, omnibus package, take it or leave it, to parliamentarians and Canadians, or doing nothing.

There is a third route proposed by my colleague. His proposal says that the Constitution is a living document and perhaps we could amend and improve it as sensible citizens and parliamentarians over time. This shows the maturity of a democracy.

I would encourage members who spoke against the motion to think very seriously about how it is they want us to amend the Constitution. I do not think the best way is to do it in a macro way or to do nothing. The best way is what is proposed in this motion, which is doing something very sensible, in a small piecemeal basis to improve the document that governs us overall.

I want to also address the whole issue, and I forget which colleague mentioned it, about there being no observable consensus in support of it. That is simply not true. The member has provided documents to us and I am sure he would be happy to provide them to all parliamentarians. There is a wide consensus in support of the motion. I would like to quote from some of the distinguished Canadians of all political persuasions who supported this in the past. John Diefenbaker in 1960 said:

My feeling was, and I think it is soundly based on Canadian constitutional development, that the federal government...ought not to exercise this power against the legislature of any province. The legislatures are elected by the people of the province and whatever one's views may be with regard to the legislation [which some MPs are asking me to disallow], to do otherwise would be to place the federal government in the position of a judge over the legislation passed within the competence of the legislature, something that no longer is considered a proper and reasonable attitude for the federal government to take.

I would like to quote from another prime minister. Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau wrote in his famous work *Federalism and the French Canadians*:

A Bill of Rights could be incorporated into the constitution, to limit the powers that legal authorities have over human rights in Canada. In addition to protecting traditional political and social rights, such a bill would specifically put the French and English languages on an equal basis before the law. The protection of basic rights having thus been ensured, there would be no danger in reducing the central government's predominance in certain areas (for example, by abolishing the right of reservation and disallowance); at the same time, this would have the advantage of getting rid of some of the constitution's imperial phraseology.

It was supported in 1970 by Noel Lyon and Ronald Atkey. It was supported by former NDP premier Roy Romanow in 1975:

It can be safely predicted that if the federal power of disallowance were to be reactivated, there would be a strong reaction from the provinces.

The Trudeau government again in 1978 supported it. The Pepin-Robarts report of 1979 stated:

• (1905)

We would eliminate the two methods by which provincial legislation can be blocked by Ottawa. [B]oth methods have gradually faded from use and now are considered dormant. To eliminate these two powers would not only recognize a situation which exists, but would recognize the ability and right of the provincial governments to act as responsibly as non-subordinate bodies.

I will quote from a 1980 document from the Liberal Party of Quebec, which was signed by Claude Ryan, a very distinguished Quebecker and Canadian, I would say:

Such anachronisms and infringements of the fundamental principles of federalism must be completely and unconditionally set aside. These powers, conceived at a time when there was a concern for possible immature legislative actions by the provinces, have become obsolete and no longer have any place in a pluralist country with a constitutionally entrenched Bill of Rights.

That was from "A New Canadian Federation" of 1980.

I will quote the Supreme Court of Canada from 1981:

[R]eservation and disallowance of provincial legislation, although in law still open, have, to all intents and purposes, fallen into disuse.

This was included in the Victoria charter and in the Charlottetown accord and has enjoyed support from distinguished Canadians from all political persuasions. I think members of all parties should take a serious look at this motion.

I think what has happened here, frankly, is that perhaps members have not quite fully understood the entire motion. Therefore they should take a second look at it. I would encourage them to do so.

I would perhaps, as a way of concluding, talk about exactly why it is that my colleague is bringing this forward. There are two arguments that are used in opposition to this as well. These powers are not really being used any more, so therefore why should we worry? Why is there a need for action?

If it is truly the case that these powers are not being used anymore, then the other question presents itself: why is there any opposition to removing them if these powers have fallen into disuse and they will not be used again? If the federal government has no intention of using them, then why would any federal political party object to them being removed? It would actually just be a matter of cleaning up the Constitution.

Then the second question is asked. If these powers are just dormant, as my colleague said—it is either the fact that they have fallen into disuse and will never be used or the fact that they are dormant and they may be used—then that is a more dangerous thing. The federal government could in fact step in and use these sections under the Constitution to disallow provincial legislation. I think he spoke very well in saying that we are a mature democracy. We have provinces in this country that are as mature as any democracy across the globe and they need to be respected as such. For a federal government to step in and disallow provincial statutes is unacceptable today.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

I would counsel colleagues on all sides of the House to look at the issue seriously. If these powers have fallen into disuse and are no longer necessary, then let us clean up the Constitution and remove them, but if in fact a federal political party actually believes that in some cases they may be used that party should stand up and say so. In our view, the Conservative Party's view, these powers should not be used in a mature democracy and therefore we strongly recommend and urge all members on all sides of the House to remove them and support this motion.

• (1910)

**Mr. Ken Boshcoff (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to say how cordial this debate has been and I believe that all Canadians appreciate that. When they see parliamentarians debating without derision and discord, it is something that we can all be congratulated for. We are representing all the parties here and we are having a very practical and productive discussion. Although this will not be my most riveting speech or presentation, I am sure it will contribute to this evening.

When we talk about the historical source of the disallowance and reservation powers, we know historically both these powers have their origin in the British colonial system. The power of reservation had its origin in the instructions given by the Crown to the governor of a colony as to the exercise by him of the power to assent to bills passed by the colonial legislative body and both these powers are referred to in the Colonial Laws Validity Act of 1865, something we are all quite familiar with.

The legal source of the actual powers as they exist today in relation to provincial bills and legislation is as follows. With respect to the reservation power, the Constitution Act of 1867 confers upon the lieutenant governors of the provinces the power to reserve a bill for the Governor General, who may then decide whether or not to grant assent to the bill.

With respect to the disallowance power, as my hon. colleague has mentioned, the Constitution Act of 1867 also confers a separate power upon the Governor General to disallow provincial statutes. There are some particular points to note about these powers.

First, the powers of reservation and disallowance continue to exist in law and apply to all provincial statutes without exception. As a matter of political reality, however, their use would now be considered by many to be unacceptable and some constitutional authors go so far as to suggest their use would be unconstitutional in the conventional sense.

Second, these powers can be exercised only in relation to an entire bill or statute. It is not possible to reserve or disallow only a part of a bill or a statute.

Third, the Minister of Justice is responsible for advising on the reservation and disallowance of provincial bills and acts in accordance with the Department of Justice Act, which provides that Minister of Justice “shall advise on the legislative Acts and proceedings of each of the legislatures of the provinces...”

There was a recent comment by the Supreme Court of Canada. In it the nature and scope of these powers were accurately reflected in the following comments by Mr. Justice La Forest, when he had the occasion to note that the federal declaratory power “is not the only

draconian power vested in the federal authorities”. He went on to state:

The powers of disallowance and reservation accorded the federal government by ss. 55-57 and 90 of the Constitution Act, 1867 give it unrestricted authority to veto any provincial legislation. The exercise of this authority is wholly a matter of discretion for the federal government, and in the Reference case just noted, it was stated that the courts are not constitutionally empowered to express an opinion about its exercise—

He further commented on page 372:

It is the very breadth of these powers that protects against their frequent or inappropriate use. It was not the courts but political forces that dictated their near demise. They are, as was said of the power of disallowance, “delicate” and “difficult” powers to exercise and “will always be considered a harsh exercise of power, unless in cases of great and manifest necessity”...Their inappropriate use will always raise grave political issues—

Those issues time will not permit me to continue to discuss.

• (1915)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx):** The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the order paper.

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## ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[English]

### FISHERIES

**Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to discuss with my friend, the parliamentary secretary, a fishing issue. Unfortunately, we have with us the former minister of fisheries. I know it will be difficult for the parliamentary secretary to read his prepared speech and try to explain why the Department of Fisheries and Oceans is in such a mess. He knows as well as I do that a lot of the mess is because of the former minister, but he cannot say it very well.

Some time ago I raised a question concerning the minister's visit to the United Nations. At that time he, along with a number of others, agreed to a document that basically discussed the type of fishing gear that was being used. Concerns were expressed about bottom trawling, in particular, and other gear that would do damage to the environment.

No one in his right mind would object to governments expressing concern about some of the fishing gear being used, particularly when it is used in sensitive areas. We support any effort that the minister or the government would take in these areas.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

However this initiative was taken in haste. We were told, and it is on the record, by officials of the department that even the department itself was unaware of some of the wording of the resolution until a couple of days before the actual signing, and that no one really knew what they were signing. There is no excuse for that because we should never sign a document that has been changed or tampered with from the original, which, I guess, approvals were given. Either someone is not telling us the truth of the matter or the government acted in haste.

The concern we expressed at the time was that the minister did this without any consultation whatsoever with industry. Industry picked up the information that the minister was going to agree to such an agreement a couple of days before it actually happened. There was a flurry of activity and we had several excuses about the wording being changed.

This might work out okay if it is done in moderation and if it is done to deal with poor technology used in sensitive areas not affecting the general harvesting of products such as shrimp for instance or general trawling for groundfish.

As Canadians we have to be concerned with the destruction that has taken place, particularly just outside our 200 mile limit. Most of that destruction is being done with bottom trawling and we have to be very sensitive about that. However just to go out and ban bottom trawling would be extremely unproductive at this time. We have to educate the people who fish in these areas, that such technology can be very damaging because a bottom trawl is almost like a vacuum cleaner. It sucks up practically everything that is there and in directing for one species it is catching several others, which is having complete and utter devastation on our stocks.

My question was not to express concern about certain technologies, nor was it that we were against using destructive technology in sensitive areas. It was the fact that the minister would rush off and do something like this without proper consultation, because sometimes we can do ourselves a lot more damage than good.

On the other hand, if properly presented with the right cooperation from other countries, we could get a stronger agreement. All we are seeing from the foreign countries with which we deal in these arrangements and all these conferences we have is lip service. They come here and listen when we talk to them about this but we are not getting anywhere.

I hope the parliamentary secretary will tell us that he learned from that and that collectively we can go on—

• (1920)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx):** The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

**Hon. Shawn Murphy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, I appreciate the opportunity today to rise in the House and say a few words on this important debate about the United Nations resolution on sustainable fisheries.

The UN resolution is very prudent. It was not made in haste. It was made after a lot of negotiation and deliberation. Difficult discussions led to its adoption. It spells out the need for an evaluation on a case by case basis and the use of sound scientific

advice to define a destructive fishing practice prior to consideration of any prohibition of fishing.

The hon. member in his speech said that several others supported this resolution. I will tell the hon. member how many other countries supported it. When the matter came to a vote before the United Nations, 140 countries voted in favour of this resolution, one voted against the it and two countries abstained. I am a little surprised, shocked and disappointed that the Conservative Party does not support this resolution which was adopted by 140 countries.

The resolution generally reflects present Canadian practices in its domestic waters. The goal of our management domestically is to limit the use of destructive fishing practices to maintain the sustainability of the resource. This resolution does not speak to our domestic waters, but it speaks to global waters. We all know how destructive foreign overfishing is when destructive methods are used in marine sensitive areas.

In areas where highly sensitive marine ecosystems are known to exist and where there is scientific evidence that fishing practices are having a long term adverse effect on the ecosystem, targeted action is already taken to mitigate effects. We have taken such steps in the Lophelia conservation area, Endeavour Hydrothermal Vents and the Gully, with the full support, knowledge and cooperation of the fishing industry.

For Canada, the key to this resolution is to deploy management tools internationally that we as a country presently use within domestic Canadian waters. All stakeholders need to be a part of the solution if we are to be effective.

The resolution will be implemented inside the EEZ in a way that is acceptable to Canadian stakeholders following current practices. Outside the EEZ it is our intention to work with NAFO on the east coast and with the various regional organizations on the west coast to implement it.

Canada's position is clear. Attention should be focused on identifying and perfecting vulnerable marine ecosystems and ensuring the sustainability of the resource.

I would like to quote from the minister in a recent address to the United Nations. He said, "No specific gear type is inherently destructive...From experience, we know that all gear types can have negative impacts."

• (1925)

**Mr. Loyola Hearn:** Mr. Speaker, in responding, the member took it for granted that we thoroughly opposed what the minister did, but not at all. As he well knows, we are much more concerned about what is happening to the fishery than the government opposite.

I have to take issue with a couple of his remarks. He said that this decision was not made in haste, yet on the record, chief government officials have told us that the wording of the resolution was changed a couple of days before the meeting. Consequently, they did not know that some of the wording would be in the resolution. That to me is making the decision in haste.

He also said that any decisions made would be done after using sound scientific advice. We do not have any.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

**Hon. Shawn Murphy:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from the member opposite. The UN resolution on sustainable fisheries, which was passed recently, deals with the need to combat destructive fishing practices in international waters where sensitive ecosystems exist. The resolution specifically mentions protecting seamounts, hypothermal vents and cold water corals. Fisheries and Oceans Canada is working to protect these sensitive areas in Canadian waters by closing them to fishing and other activities.

The governments in these areas work hand in hand to protect marine ecosystems, and it was on the industry's recommendation that we first explored protecting the Endeavour Hypothermal Vents off Canada's west coast. The Endeavour vents have since been designated as a marine protected area.

On behalf of Canada's Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, I would like to reassure the member opposite that since this resolution generally reflects Canadian domestic practices—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx):** The hon. member for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia.

## HEALTH

**Mr. Steven Fletcher (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, last night in the House I had hoped to ask the health minister about his lack of compassion for those who have not yet received compensation for hepatitis C. Unfortunately, the minister was unable to attend, so I looked forward to addressing the parliamentary secretary for health. I was surprised to find that he was not here, but the parliamentary secretary for the environment was in his stead.

Having said that, I asked a series of very good questions about hepatitis C, and the answers I got back dealt with online pharmacies. I am not sure what the connection between the two are. Perhaps the secretary could fill me in when he answers my next question. However, I find it disturbing, the lack of compassion that the Liberal Party has continually exhibited to the hepatitis C victims.

Today, I will ask some questions about flu vaccines. However, I would like to point out that be it flu vaccines, hepatitis C or many other health issues, the government seems to feel free to ignore the needs of ordinary Canadians.

With that introduction I will move on to the issue at hand.

Nobody can predict when a flu pandemic will hit. Health experts say that it is long overdue. A worldwide flu pandemic has hit every 10 to 40 years since the 16th century. There have been three in the last century, the most deadly being the Spanish flu in 1918 that killed almost 20 million people. Many believe a new virus that appeared in Hong Kong in 1997 will create the next pandemic. We have seen it move from chickens to people, and it has caused death in about 75% of those who have been infected.

There has been concern that a new flu pandemic will occur and there are already examples in Asia that threaten humans. These viruses seem to come from birds. An interesting development has occurred in the area of flu vaccination. Cornell University has announced recently that it may be possible for a major breakthrough and that a universal flu vaccine may be found.

Could the member tell us what the government is doing to improve Canada's research capabilities so we can find ways to prevent the next pandemic? Could the member could elaborate on other measures the government is taking in this regard?

● (1930)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx):** May I remind the hon. member that he is not to mention who is not in the House, whether it be today or whether it was yesterday. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health.

**Hon. Robert Thibault (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I do respect the admonition that you gave to the House. However, since my presence yesterday was brought up, I would like to point out to the House that I had the great pleasure of accompanying the Prime Minister to Nova Scotia yesterday to make a historic accord on funding with Nova Scotia. It was related to the offshore revenue that will greatly assist that province in meeting all commitments that it has to the people of Nova Scotia, including the areas of vaccination which of course the federal government gets involved in ensuring, with the provinces and territories, that the proper amount of vaccines are out in the country as needed.

Canada is the leading country in terms of vaccinations proportional to its population. We encourage all Canadians, especially those who are at greater risk, those who have some respiratory ailments, people over the age 65, to seek those inoculations.

The member points out our lack of concern, I believe that would be the way that he puts it, for the ordinary Canadian. I have been in public life for a long time, municipal and later in the federal government, and I have yet to meet that ordinary Canadian. I find all Canadians to be extraordinary. Those are the people that I work with all the time, 30 million extraordinary Canadians, all of them different, and all with different aspirations. We always ensure that we give them the tools that they need to meet their aspirations and keep this extraordinary country growing.

I do not look to establish big norms where everybody is the same, all families look the same, two and a half children and a dog. I recognize that extraordinary Canadians need extraordinary measures and that of course is what we do.

The member points to research and that is the crux of the important question. What do we do in vaccine research?

We have great confidence in the private sector, but we know that it needs some assistance and that is why we have health research funding, funding in other programs that we have in Industry Canada that assists in the research and developing of new products within the country. Another area is to improve our regulatory side so that we are effective and efficient. Product safety is very important.

We have seen the failings of other countries where safety has not been protected in the approval process. We want to ensure that we always protect the safety and integrity of our system, but not unduly stop the research from happening with the approvals of the drugs as they go forward.

The international issue is very important because the member was pointing out what is happening in Asia in development. We cannot do it alone and stand alone. Canada's participation in the World Health Organization, the Pan American Health Organization, assisting in the research with other countries, participating with them in their research, and the exchange of information is important so that we develop new products jointly in a timely fashion. This contributes greatly to the safety of those 30 million extraordinary Canadians that we seek to serve.

**Mr. Steven Fletcher:** Mr. Speaker, your point is well taken. Sometimes it is hard to tell when the Liberals are in the House and when they are not. I am really quite surprised at the response that we just heard.

The member's words echo hollow in this chamber, literally and figuratively. My question was specifically, what is Canada doing to develop a vaccine for the next pandemic and/or what are we doing to prepare for that pandemic?

*Adjournment Proceedings*

I am really disappointed also that the member has creatively attached flu vaccines and hepatitis C to his trip to Nova Scotia. By the way, I have been to Nova Scotia. It is a very nice place, but I do not see the relevance to the issue at hand.

Could the member please answer my question?

● (1935)

**Hon. Robert Thibault:** Mr. Speaker, I certainly hope that when the member was in Nova Scotia that he had a chance to visit Dalhousie University and that he saw the great work that is being done in research and development by the researchers there, using the Canada Foundation for Innovation funding, using the research chairs, and using the Canadian Institute for Health Information. All this funding, together with the private sector and in cooperation with the universities across this country, meets the challenges as suggested by the member opposite. He will see no better example of it than in Nova Scotia.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx):** The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:36 p.m.)

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