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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, June 1, 2005

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, June 1, 2005

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

• (1400)

[*English*]

The Speaker: As is our practice on Wednesday we will now sing O Canada, and we will be led by the hon. member for Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale.

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1405)

[*English*]

GRANTHAM MASONIC LODGE

Hon. Walt Lastewka (St. Catharines, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House of Commons today to recognize the hard work of the Grantham Masonic Lodge No. 697 in St. Catharines.

It was an honour and privilege for me to attend a special gala dinner to recognize the 150th anniversary of the Grand Lodge of Canada. This gala celebration raised over \$4,600 for Women's Place of St. Catharines and North Niagara.

I would like to take this opportunity to praise the charity work of the Masons in the Niagara district who have also raised thousands of dollars for hearing aids for children in our region as part of the help to hear program.

The Shriners of the Masonic family do wonderful work in their hospitals for children in 22 cities across North America. I commend the hard work of worshipful master Leslie Pirbus and worshipful brother Norman Pemberton, and all brethren of Grantham Masonic Lodge No. 697 for devoting so much time to help others in our community.

On behalf of the people of St. Catharines, I thank the Masonic family whose dedicated efforts have helped to ensure the well-being of countless individuals.

BRIAN “FROSTY” FORST

Mr. Paul Forseth (New Westminster—Coquitlam, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to radio broadcaster Brian “Frosty” Forst, host of the CKNW morning show. He retired last week from New Westminster's station, the giant 98. He was a reliable favourite that kept the station as top dog and the most listened to station in British Columbia.

Frosty started at CKNW in 1963 and soon made the rolling home show a must for every driver. He became host of the morning show in 1973. His irreverent style and razor sharp wit started a new era in Vancouver area radio and made him the most highly rated morning host in British Columbia.

I want to recognize the significant contribution that Frosty made to the success of CKNW and to the quality of life of the thousands who came to rely on him. I thank him for bringing levity and humour to the morning show for over 40 years. He was the one who could make my day.

Brian “Frosty” Forst, host of the CKNW morning show says goodbye. Farewell Frosty and happy retirement.

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• (1410)

OPERATION BLUE STAR

Hon. Gurbax Malhi (Bramalea—Gore—Malton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was 21 years ago, in the first week of June 1984, that the attack on the Golden Temple in Amritsar, Punjab and 39 other historic places of worship took place and led to the deaths of thousands of innocent men, women and children.

Known as Operation Blue Star, the storming of the Golden Temple violated the basic right to religious freedom. Fortunately, here in Canada the right to worship remains protected.

I would invite my colleagues to take a moment to reflect on the many lives lost during the attack on the Golden Temple. We must never forget what happened in 1984 in Amritsar, Punjab. We must work to ensure that no such tragedy is ever repeated again.

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[*Translation*]

GALA DES MERCURIADES

Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, at the Gala des Mercuriades, Marcel Baril Ltée, a well-known company in my riding, won the Mercure award in the distribution and trade category.

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Located in Rouyn-Noranda, Marcel Baril Ltée specializes in distribution and serves 60% of the Quebec market in very diverse sectors. This dynamic family business is well known for its logistics excellence and original methods of ensuring customer satisfaction.

The directors of Marcel Baril Ltée are bold entrepreneurs. They have made their hopes and dreams come true, while respecting their clients and their employees.

I want to congratulate the entire staff of Marcel Baril Ltée for the outstanding achievements of their company whose success has benefited the entire Abitibi-Témiscamingue region.

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[English]

CARCINOID CANCER

Mr. Anthony Rota (Nipissing—Timiskaming, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring awareness to carcinoid cancer.

Carcinoid is a neuroendocrine cancer which is usually slow growing, and often overlooked and misdiagnosed. Many people with carcinoid have no symptoms, or the symptoms are attributed to other more common conditions. Many times carcinoid can be diagnosed with a simple blood or urine test; however, because of the rarity of the cancer, no prognosis can be given.

Because the disease is so rare, there is little research being done and very few funds being devoted to this cause. Dr. Walter Kocha at the London hospital is now devoting his entire practice to carcinoid patients. Montreal's Royal Victoria Hospital has just set up a carcinoid cancer foundation. More money for research is desperately needed.

I salute those who are doing everything they can to raise awareness and help fight this terrible disease. I wish to say to the Binkley family in my riding that our prayers are with them. Keep strong and remember, cancer can be beaten.

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CAMBRIDGE

Mr. Gary Goodyear (Cambridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government has no real solutions to the problems that matter to the residents of my riding of Cambridge.

I am pleased to see that the hospitals in the Liberal ridings north of us received millions of dollars but Cambridge barely got enough to pay a month's hydro.

I was pleased to hear that of the billions promised for affordable housing, the Cambridge Legion Branch 272 has a very slim shot at a measly \$10,000 to study affordable housing.

I want to thank, though, the Liberals who keep coming into the riding of Cambridge without so much as a courtesy call to announce, re-announce, then call a press conference to announce once again and then later have other Liberal members covertly sneak in, sometimes at night, to announce yet again what was announced just before.

When the members opposite find the member with the cheque-book and not the verbal diarrhea, I would be happy to give them a proper tour of Cambridge.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL BIOLOGY OLYMPIAD

Mr. Marc Godbout (Ottawa—Orléans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Ottawa—Orléans can claim the honour of having one of Canada's brightest young scientific minds.

Seventeen-year-old Andrew Holt, a grade 11 student at St. Matthews Catholic High School in Orléans, is one of the four students from across the country and the only one from the city of Ottawa who has qualified to represent Canada at the 16th International Biology Olympiad that will be held in Beijing, China, from July 10 to 17, 2005.

The International Biology Olympiad is an annual event for the top secondary biology students from around the world. It provides young people an opportunity to explore science as a career choice, as well as to promote the importance of biology in the world.

On behalf of the Ottawa—Orléans community, I congratulate and wish Andrew good luck. We will all be rooting for him.

* * *

● (1415)

[Translation]

TERREBONNE STAGE OF THE TOUR DU GRAND MONTRÉAL

Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today was the Terrebonne stage of the Tour du Grand Montréal, considered one of the most important women's cycling events in North America.

Along with our champions, Lyne Bessette and Geneviève Jeanson, over 150 young students from des Affluents school district took part in the Terrebonne stage of the Tour du Grand Montréal. It was an opportunity to compete alongside the greatest female cyclists in Quebec.

I want to congratulate the 175 volunteers who dedicated their time and energy today. Under the supervision of the Terrebonne police force and Vélo Terrebonne, this stage of the Tour du Grand Montréal winds through the magnificent scenery of Île-des-Moulins. For four years now, this event has made Terrebonne one of the top sports cities in Quebec. For one entire day, Terrebonne is the sports capital of Quebec.

The Bloc Québécois congratulates the organizers of this event in the riding of Terrebonne—Blainville.

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[English]

CADET MOVEMENT

Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this past weekend, I was honoured to be the reviewing officer for the annual inspection of the Royal Canadian Sea Cadet Corps 24 Magnificent located in Dartmouth—Cole Harbour.

The Cadet Movement is one of the finest youth organizations in Canada and provided at no charge to parents. It allows young people to learn, to lead, to travel, to make new friends and to learn about their citizenship.

Whatever career choice these young men and women make, they will benefit from the leadership training with the cadets.

I want to pay particular tribute to two individuals who were highlighted this past weekend. Cadet CPO 2 Krista Raffel was awarded the Lord Strathcona Medal of Excellence for her above average leadership and personal commitment to her program and her fellow cadets. In addition, she was awarded a \$1,000 scholarship. Chief Petty Officer First Class Scott Latham of the Royal Canada Sea Cadets 339 Iroquois Corps was named Sea Cadet of the Year by the Navy League of Canada, an award given for his dedication, enthusiasm, high academic achievement and volunteer spirit.

I congratulate all the cadets for their hard work, creative minds and love of country.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a psychopath charged with 164 crimes, convicted of 34, one for shooting a policeman in the back of the head, was released by a failed judiciary back into the public.

This psychopath then subhumanly brutalized 64-year-old Dougald Miller of Edmonton, rendering him incapable of ever caring for himself again.

Dougald still has mind and eye movement that, assisted by new technology, will allow him to speak again. The cost for this and the \$1,500 per month for therapy not covered by health care were unconscionably left up to his wife, Leslie, to financially bear alone.

Edmontonians have generously stepped forward to give help when the government would not to bring the magic of technology to give Dougald a voice once again.

I congratulate all who generously helped. We will now learn of his experiences and Dougald's eyes will tell us his story.

* * *

NATIONAL DAY AGAINST HOMOPHOBIA

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is National Day Against Homophobia, the first time this day has been celebrated outside of Quebec. I therefore stand with pride as a member of a government responsible for removing, within all areas of federal law, discrimination and hate against persons because of their sexual orientation.

One area of discrimination still exists and Bill C-38 would ensure that the legal institution of marriage will be available to same sex couples in Canada. Yet de jure action against discrimination is not enough. We need to ensure that programs are put into place to address de facto discrimination.

In a report released yesterday by West Enders Against Violence Everywhere, 120 Vancouver residents reported that they had been victims of gay bashing. We must redouble our efforts to raise public

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awareness of the challenges that homosexuals face within their communities and their workplace.

As an MP, I will continue to work for all Canadians to feel welcome and respected in our society regardless of their differences. I urge all to participate actively in an effort to end de facto homophobia.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Liberal cuts to the EI program in 1996 hurt women workers more than men. Studies show that cuts to EI benefits have made a significant contribution to poverty among women and their families.

Human Resources Canada knows its policies are unfair. Its 2004 assessment report said that women exhaust benefits in higher proportions than men and that since women are more likely to work part time hours they establish claims with fewer hours of work than men resulting in fewer weeks of benefits.

Although women who work part time pay EI premiums on every paycheque, they often do not qualify for maternity benefits because they simply cannot qualify under the 600 hour rule. This injustice has to end.

Across the country only 33% of women workers who apply for EI are deemed eligible and are able to access the fund when they need it the most.

Tomorrow, through the NDP opposition motion, all members of the House will have the opportunity to make the system work better for Canadian women. This is about making the system fair for all Canadians and ending the discrimination that exists in the current federal program.

* * *

● (1420)

EMERGENCY RESPONSE WORKERS

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this past weekend, a vital link between Canada and the United States was closed for several hours as a result of what was thought to be a spill of hazardous material. The good news is that it only turned out to be mace.

Oral Questions

This effectively shut down the Rainbow Bridge in Niagara Falls on one of the busiest weekends for border crossings and traffic had to be rerouted to other crossings. The bridge was closed for over five hours.

Niagara firefighters were one of the first on the scene followed by hazardous material cleanup teams. Four people were decontaminated as a precautionary measure before they were taken to hospital and emergency workers checked out 34 others.

In her most recent report, the Auditor General raised a concern regarding the lack of appropriate training for first line responders to emergency situations such as this.

This weekend's event is just one example as to why the government must adequately fund first line responders. These individuals risk their lives on a daily basis to protect all Canadians. We must be proactive to ensure Canadians receive the best protection possible by supporting our first line responders.

* * *

[Translation]

NATIONAL DAY AGAINST HOMOPHOBIA

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today is the national day against homophobia. Its theme is "this concerns all of us".

GRIS Québec and a number of other groups in Quebec have organized numerous activities for the day in order to remind us that difference and diversity must be accepted if every human being is to be respected.

Since this concerns all of us, I am today wearing a pink triangle, the official symbol of the day against homophobia.

In the concentration camps homosexuals, who were systematically discriminated against, were identified with the pink triangle. The celebrations marking the 60th anniversary of the end of the second world war offered an opportunity for us to remember all the victims of that war, including the thousands who suffered the most terrible atrocities because of their sexual orientation.

To break the silence and ensure that such things never happen again, I invite my colleagues to wear this symbol with pride on this day.

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[English]

AMYOTROPHIC LATERAL SCLEROSIS

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, recently I introduced a private member's bill that would designate the month of June as amyotrophic lateral sclerosis month. This is also known as ALS or Lou Gehrig's disease. The bill would ensure that throughout Canada, in each and every year, the month of June shall be officially be known as ALS month.

Approximately 2,000 Canadians currently live with ALS. Two or three Canadians lose their battle to this devastating disease every day. With improved knowledge about ALS, health care providers and families can help those living with this disease live life more fully.

The ALS Society of Canada recognizes the involvement of volunteers at all levels of the organization as a vital component to achieving its mission of helping people living with ALS and raising funds for ALS research.

Throughout the month of June, ALS societies across Canada will be raising money for research through a variety of ways, one of which is through the sale of cornflowers. Members should show their support for ALS research and buy a cornflower.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

MEMBER FOR NEWTON—NORTH DELTA

Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Prime Minister told the House, "At no time... did I ever say that I would meet with the hon. member", meaning the member for Newton—North Delta, and yet the tapes show the Prime Minister's chief of staff saying quite clearly that the Prime Minister was "prepared to talk to you directly, both by phone and in person".

Why did the Prime Minister tell the House that he was unwilling to meet the member for Newton—North Delta when clearly he was?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member for Newton—North Delta called to say that he was interested in crossing the floor. I essentially said to members of the government and my staff that they could pursue discussions but that under no circumstances could any offer be made, and no offer was made.

Clearly, if the hon. member had indicated that he was prepared to cross the floor under those conditions, obviously anybody would meet with somebody who was interested in crossing the floor.

The fundamental fact is that no offer was made, no request was accepted and under those circumstances—

● (1425)

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is shifting his story. Now he admits that he did authorize his senior people to engage in discussions.

Yesterday in the House, I repeat, the Prime Minister said, "At no time, however, did I ever say that I would meet with the hon. member", and yet his health minister is on tape saying, "I talked to the Prime Minister moments ago. He will be happy to talk to you over the phone or in person".

Why did the Prime Minister not tell the truth in the House of Commons?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are dealing with serious matters here. The fact is for the Leader of the Opposition to deliberately misconstrue what was said, for the Leader of the Opposition to cast that kind of aspersion, is certainly not the level of stability and the kind of debate that Canadians are looking for.

I made it very clear that I would not meet with the hon. member unless it was under conditions that said he would cross the floor with no request being accepted and no offers being made.

Under those circumstances and unless those were there I was not prepared to meet with him.

Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is another story. The Prime Minister said that he would never meet with him. Now he says that he would meet with him under certain conditions.

When the government was courting the member for Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, the President of the Treasury Board said, “Only the Prime Minister has the authority to make an offer”.

Is not the reason the Prime Minister wanted to meet the member for Newton—North Delta so that he could make him an offer, just as he did in several other cases that we are aware of?

Hon. Tony Valeri (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister gave his chief of staff one instruction, not to make any offers, and that was the case.

The Prime Minister has been very clear about this. He was aware that his office had been approached and that the member wanted to cross the floor. The member of Parliament did not cross the floor and there was no meeting set up with the Prime Minister.

Mr. Peter MacKay (Central Nova, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the President of the Treasury Board has said that only the Prime Minister has the authority to buy off opposition members.

The Minister of Health says that talking to the chief of staff is like talking to the Prime Minister.

Published tapes now reveal that the Prime Minister's chief of staff, Tim Murphy, made offers to the Conservative member for Newton—North Delta.

Does the Prime Minister now admit that he made an offer and that his chief of staff was doing the big boss's bidding and acting on his instruction?

Hon. Tony Valeri (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister gave his chief of staff an instruction and that was not to make any offers. That instruction was followed.

Mr. Kalia, a friend of the member for Newton—North Delta, confirmed that in his statement yesterday, “they said they cannot offer anything.

Frankly, there are serious questions being raised about the accuracy of the tapes and the transcripts. Let us be clear that if there is any credibility on this particular issue it lies solely with the member for Newton—North Delta.

Mr. Peter MacKay (Central Nova, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's chief of staff is caught on tape saying that he was prepared, “to get the Ethics Commissioner to give an interim report or something to take the cloud off that would be helpful”. Clearly, the government was and is prepared to do anything to cling to power and go to any length, including offers of cabinet posts, for votes or interference with an ethics investigation.

Is the Prime Minister and his staff suggesting he can influence an independent officer of Parliament? Why will the Prime Minister not admit that he is engaged in a sordid, deal making practice? Get up and answer the question.

• (1430)

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it appears the hon. member rented a dog. If he owned one, he would not be so upset.

However, the member for Newton—North Delta made demands. No offers were made and no demands were accepted. The tapes are faulty. There is no authenticity of the tapes. The translation is faulty. The transcription from English to English is faulty. My mother tongue is Punjabi, fortunately. I can say that Conservative staffers were involved in doing the transcription—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in the tape affair, instead of assuming his responsibilities, the Prime Minister is short circuiting reality. It was all very well to state in this House that no offer had been made to the member for Newton—North Delta, but nothing justifies his being so categorical.

Contrary to what he is claiming, will the Prime Minister admit, in the light of the released transcripts, that his chief of staff and his Minister of Health were dangling future considerations, which is just as bad?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I repeat that no offer was made and no offer was accepted. This is obvious from the tapes.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, let us look at the transcription of the tapes. On the eve of a crucial vote in the House, the chief of staff said “those people who take risk, ought to be rewarded for the risk they take”.

Will the Prime Minister finally assume his responsibilities and recognize that the Conservative MP was promised future consideration in exchange for his vote?

[*English*]

Hon. Tony Valeri (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think the Prime Minister has been very clear. The Prime Minister gave his chief of staff one instruction: not to provide any offers. The member for Newton—North Delta said that he had four hours of taped conversations. He has released less than two of those. Is it any wonder that his credibility is being called into question?

I guess the real question is why so many members across the way want to leave the Conservative Party.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's only defence is to repeat that he made no offer to the MP.

If the chief of staff's intention was not to buy the vote of the member for Newton—North Delta, could the Prime Minister clarify the interpretation to be given the remarks by his chief of staff that the Liberal Party, "is a welcoming mat that has a lot of nice comfy fur on it"?

[English]

Hon. Tony Valeri (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the issue is that I see the hon. member as picking and choosing different parts of a tape, not all of which have been released.

The member for Newton—North Delta has four hours of taped conversations and has released less than two. If there is any credibility in question with respect to what has happened, I think the member would have to speak to the member for Newton—North Delta. The Prime Minister has been very clear on this.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the PM's chief of staff ruled out all direct discussion of a seat in the Senate before the May 19 vote, but mentioned there would be more manoeuvring room after the vote.

How can the Prime Minister keep saying that no promise was made, when the remarks of his chief of staff leave no doubt as to his intentions, that is, to influence, in exchange for future consideration, the vote of the Conservative MP for Newton—North Delta?

• (1435)

[English]

Hon. Tony Valeri (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member for Newton—North Delta approached, wanting to cross the floor. He wanted an offer. He did not get an offer. He did not cross the floor. There was no meeting with the Prime Minister. That is what happened.

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I need to know whether the Prime Minister condones the remarks by his chief of staff or the health minister.

The real tragedy is that we should be discussing the important issues of the nation, but these tapes are deeply concerning, so much so that Canadians are wondering what goes on in this place and whether they can really trust the political process any more.

We have now heard discussions of plausible deniability of positions. Will the Prime Minister tell us whether he condones the remarks that are now available to all Canadians to read and to listen to?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health was approached by a third party on behalf of the member for Newton—North Delta who said that he wanted to cross the floor. A meeting was held. The Minister of Health and indeed, my chief of staff in subsequent discussion made it very clear that there would be no offers forthcoming and that we would accept no requests. That is what happened.

However, I do agree with the leader of the NDP that it is a tragedy we are not discussing important issues, such as the aboriginal meeting which took place yesterday.

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we may have just witnessed an example of plausible deniability being exercised here. I am not sure.

However, I was asked, for example, what would I do if my minister of health were to have been involved in something like this. I can tell members that I have no doubt that she would have offered to step aside while the investigations from the RCMP and the Ethics Commissioner were under way so that the air could be cleared.

Does the Prime Minister have a plan to help restore confidence in this place?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the best way to restore civility to this place is that regardless of the debate, it take place in a civil way, that arguments be made in a way in which they can be made, that the leaders of the opposition stop yelling, trying to shut people down when they are on their feet, that we do what Canadians want us to do, and that is to deal with the principal issues that concern them, and that we do it in a way that would make them proud of this place, as opposed to the catcalls over here from the other side.

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is nothing more important than integrity in government. Once again the Prime Minister's version of events is at variance with the facts.

He said that the member for Newton—North Delta approached the government, and he just said it again, but the Prime Minister's own chief of staff is caught on tape saying, "you didn't approach us".

Then the Prime Minister claimed the member was refused unequivocally and he would not take no for an answer, but the word "no" does not appear once in these four hours of discussions. In fact, the chief of staff says that the Liberal Party is a welcoming mat that has a lot of nice, comfy fur on it.

Why does the Prime Minister's version of events—

The Speaker: The hon. government House leader.

Hon. Tony Valeri (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member across the way talks about four hours of tape. They have released less than two hours of tapes and that is all we have seen or heard. There is some credibility that is being called into question. As well, there are certainly some serious questions being raised about the accuracy of the tapes and the transcripts.

I guess the real question that needs to be asked again is this. Why are so many members wanting to leave the Conservative Party and why are so many members questioning the leadership of the official opposition?

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, CPC): Pretty pathetic diversions, Mr. Speaker. The Prime Minister is sticking to his story just like his chief of staff predicted when he said, "The PM will say we are not offering and making no offers. And I think that is the narrative that we have to stick to", just as his health minister said, "I'm sure rewards are there at some point, right? No one can forget such gestures, but they require a certain degree of deniability".

Is it not clear that the Prime Minister has invented a story that he is sticking to, rather than admitting to the fact that his chief of staff tried to buy the vote of a member of the opposition?

• (1440)

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the fact is I was approached by a third party, Sudesh Kalia, with demands of the member for Newton—North Delta. Those demands were rejected. He reasserted the demands. Those demands were again rejected. No offers were made. None were accepted. That is why he is not sitting on this side of the House.

* * *

CHILD CARE

Ms. Rona Ambrose (Edmonton—Spruce Grove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the premier of New Brunswick is clearly listening to parents. He has said that he will not sign any day care deal with the Prime Minister unless it supports all choices for parents. However, today we have learned again that the Liberals will not support choice in child care.

The Minister of Social Development has said that New Brunswick will get no day care money unless it only supports the Liberal plan. Why will the minister not listen to the parents in New Brunswick who are asking for choice in child care?

Hon. Ken Dryden (Minister of Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, we have signed agreements with five provinces at this point. Our officials agreed with the officials of New Brunswick in terms of a deal with New Brunswick, but no agreement has been signed. As we have made clear to the provinces and to the territories, the \$5 billion over five years is for regulated early learning and child care according to the quad principles.

Ms. Rona Ambrose (Edmonton—Spruce Grove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is clear that the Liberal day care plan is a two tier program, money for a few and none for most. I do not know how the minister can justify giving money to some parents and none to others.

Why are the Liberals continuing to support a two tier day care program?

Hon. Ken Dryden (Minister of Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, this program is for everyone across the country. I might remind the hon. member that the only voices that we heard from the other side came in the last election campaign, a \$2,000 tax credit that would have the effect—

Some hon. members: More, more.

The Speaker: Order, please. The members are going to get more. The minister has at least 10 seconds remaining in the time for his answer and it appears he is going to say more. We will want to be able to hear it.

Hon. Ken Dryden: Clearly, Mr. Speaker, the side opposite is very proud of the fact that the \$2,000 tax credit which was—

The Speaker: Order, please. I am afraid the 10 seconds did get used up, all but one or two. There is not enough time left I am afraid for more from the minister, but I am sure there will be other questions.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

* * *

MEMBER FOR NEWTON—NORTH DELTA

Ms. Monique Guay (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when the government tried to influence the vote of the member for Newton—North Delta, the Minister of Health said:

In fact, cabinet can be arranged right away. For the other, you don't want to lose the advantage.

How can the Prime Minister continue to deny everything, when not only did his chief of staff make promises, but his Minister of Health, on the eve of a confidence vote, said such a thing to a Conservative member in an attempt to persuade him to vote with the government? Is that not precisely what we call influencing the vote of an MP in exchange for consideration?

• (1445)

[English]

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have already said that the member for Newton—North Delta made demands. They were not accepted. No offers were made.

The problem with the tapes is that they appear to be edited, spliced and excised. Audio is hard to hear. The English transcription is very deficient. The Punjabi translation is even worse. The fact is that there is very little credibility attached to those tapes.

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Guay (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health went on to say, "The Minister of Public Works was made parliamentary secretary, that thing cannot be ruled out. That, the Prime Minister can say to you or not. If that cannot happen right now, that will be done in two or four weeks. You do understand that, right?"

How can the Prime Minister continue to claim that this was not an attempt to buy a member's vote on the eve of a crucial vote here in the House?

[English]

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member for Newton—North Delta approached us and made demands. They were rebuffed. No offers were made. None were accepted by us. We basically told the hon. member he could cross the floor and we would be welcoming him. He did not. That is why he is not on this side of the House.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's chief of staff goes much further. He said:

I think, as you will see, the PM will say we are not offering and making no offers. And I think that is the narrative we have to stick to it. Or make the PM a liar.

Is that not precisely the narrative the Prime Minister and his ministers have been using from the beginning, confirming the taped conversations? What are we to think of such behaviour?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Tony Valeri (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has been clear. He was aware that his office had been approached and that the member wanted to cross the floor. He approached wanting to cross the floor. The MP did not cross the floor. There was no meeting set up with the Prime Minister. In fact, the member tried to strike a deal. There was no offer made. The hon. member is supposed to be sitting somewhere over there, but I am not quite sure where.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I maintain that on the tape the Minister of Health and the Prime Minister's chief of staff are implying to the hon. member that they will offer him a position, using the Minister of Public Works as an example, saying it would take some time, but it would work out, saying everything the hon. member would want to hear to make him cross the floor. I would say that is an offence under section 119 of the Criminal Code. Trying to influence the vote of a member of Parliament is very serious.

[English]

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have already said, the member approached us. We rejected his demands. The fact is that we are dealing with a serial taper who has had 14 days to possibly manipulate those tapes. The translation is not authenticated. The tapes are hard to hear. The English is badly transcribed. The Punjabi is badly translated. There is no stock that can be placed in those tapes.

* * *

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Jim Prentice (Calgary Centre-North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on April 11 of this year the House of Commons implored the Deputy Prime Minister to take immediate action on the residential schools file. The Deputy Prime Minister's response has been a political agreement and a year long study, no settlement money, no apology, no national truth and reconciliation commission, no budgetary envelope, and no changes to the ADR process.

After five years and \$700 million, why is the government offering nothing more than empty promises and more delay?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I think the hon. member is aware, the residential schools unit in my department actually funded a report done by the AFN. We encouraged the AFN to study the approach that we were taking to residential schools. In fact, it published a very thorough report, the recommendations of which the federal representative will take up, among other recommendations, with claimants, with claimants' lawyers, with the churches and with the churches' lawyers.

I would hope that we all have the same objective here, which is to reach a timely, just and fair conclusion.

● (1450)

[Translation]

Mr. Jim Prentice (Calgary Centre-North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the House asked for immediate and urgent action, in consideration of the life expectancy of the former students at Indian residential

schools. They are dying at a rate of five per day. Judge Iacobucci is a negotiator, not a mediator or an adjudicator. He is only required to make a recommendation next year. The former students deserve an immediate, fair and decent resolution.

Why is the government continuing to mismanage this file?

[English]

Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): In fact, Mr. Speaker, we are very aware of the concerns, especially of the aged and the sick, in relation to the resolution of their claims. In fact, the national chief and the AFN are very aware of that, which is why dealing with those claims in a timely fashion is one of the principles that the national chief, the AFN and this government agreed to on Monday.

I really do not understand the hon. member. I do not doubt his motivations. I have no doubt that he cares about the resolution of these matters, but I do not understand why he does not accept the fact that the national chief, the AFN and this government are working together to—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Provencher.

* * *

SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

Mr. Vic Toews (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the public works minister stated that no deal had been made with former Prime Minister Chrétien regarding the Gomery commission, yet Mr. Chrétien's lawyers state, "Arrangements have been made with the government by which Mr. Chrétien will suspend the proceeding which he has launched".

When will the minister disclose the specific nature of the arrangement to the House?

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Mr. Chrétien made a decision. He has the right to pursue a course of action before an independent judicial inquiry. He is exercising that option.

Let us be clear. This government and this Prime Minister have supported and continue to support the work of Justice Gomery because we want Canadians to have the truth.

Mr. Vic Toews (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fact remains that Mr. Chrétien's lawyers have stated, "Arrangements have been made with the government by which Mr. Chrétien will suspend the proceeding which he has launched".

Canadians have a right to know. What is the nature of these arrangements? Why will the government not tell Canadians the real facts about the deal it has made with Mr. Chrétien in the backroom?

Oral Questions

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is ironic that after months of the Conservative Party demanding that the Prime Minister in fact intervene and try to convince Mr. Chrétien to pursue a course of action, when Mr. Chrétien by his own volition makes a decision to pursue a course of action, for which the member for Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam has in fact congratulated him, they are somehow upset with that.

They in fact are not being very consistent, because the course of action that Mr. Chrétien has taken is the course of action that they have been asking Mr. Chrétien to take for some time. They cannot have it both ways.

* * *

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Nancy Karetak-Lindell (Nunavut, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask a question of great national importance.

Last night the Prime Minister concluded an unprecedented cabinet committee meeting with the national aboriginal leaders. He said that the meeting marked a new beginning in the relationship with Canada's first nations, Inuit and Métis.

Could the Minister of Indian Affairs explain how yesterday's meeting marks a new beginning for us?

Hon. Andy Scott (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member and members of the aboriginal affairs committee for their work on this file. Yesterday's meeting did in fact mark a historic new beginning. We agreed on specific policies in housing, education, health and negotiations and we have signed political accords to build on that success.

This could not have happened without the leadership of the Prime Minister and the vision of the five national aboriginal leaders. It is a tribute to their faith in this government and in this country that these deals were signed.

* * *

● (1455)

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a recent report shows that greenhouse gas emissions in Canada are growing even faster than the rate of our economy. Little of the money that has been promised has been spent and what has seems to have been wasted.

The government should be ashamed of its record. The so-called green plan demands that ordinary Canadians who are responsible for only one-quarter of these emissions are meant to clean up 75% of them. When will the government demand that the big polluters, the final emitters, do their fair share to clean the air?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): In fact, Mr. Speaker, among all the Kyoto countries, Canada alone has regulated targets for industry. Europe has only transitory targets. Our targets are very demanding but they are achievable. In 2012 we will

have a greener Canada and we will be more competitive. This action plan for climate change will help a lot with that.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister says they have plans and they have money, but the money has not gone out and the plan is not working. On a day when a national magazine has lauded former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney as the greenest PM, the competition seems to be too fierce for this current administration.

The NDP has a plan that will work and will put Canadians back to work while cleaning up the environment. After so many years of failures, how does the minister expect Canadians to trust that the money promised will actually be spent and that pollution will finally go down?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, by definition the plan cannot have started to work since the plan has not started at all because we do not have a budget yet. If we do not have a budget yet it is because the successors of Brian Mulroney are not ready to put in a penny or a dime for the environment or anything for climate change. They do not even believe in climate change. They want to fight against it. It is a shame.

* * *

SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

Mr. Gary Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, according to Jean Chrétien's lawyer, a deal has been struck with the Government of Canada to temporarily withdraw the application to have Justice Gomery removed from the inquiry. Mr. Chrétien's lawyer said, "Arrangements have been made with the government".

Given that Mr. Chrétien's lawyer has admitted to the deal, will the Prime Minister admit that a deal has been struck and tell this House just exactly what is in this deal? What have they traded off to get Mr. Chrétien to withdraw this application?

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can tell him that Mr. Chrétien as an individual has the right, and the tendency, to make his own decisions. In fact, I believe that he has done exactly that. He has made a decision as to his own representation before a judicial inquiry. He has the right to do that. He exercised that right as an individual.

Mr. Gary Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, someone is not telling the truth. Mr. Chrétien's lawyer has said that there have been arrangements with the government and the Minister of Public Works is categorically denying it.

Why did he say there was no deal yesterday? There seems to be a problem on that side of the House with remembering conversations. Which Liberal is not telling the truth in this matter?

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if we forget things on this side of the House it is because we typically do not tape conversations, but beyond that I would urge the hon. member, when he is speaking about conversations, to remember what he said yesterday in the House. In fact, he said:

Mr. Speaker, the commission has heard months and months of testimony from numerous witnesses. Admittedly, there is conflicting testimony—

Oral Questions

He was right yesterday, for a change, when he admitted that there is conflicting testimony, which is why he ought to change his position and actually urge Justice Gomery to continue his work and ensure that Canadians have the fulsome report from Justice Gomery.

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. Brian Pallister (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the underground economy deprives provincial and federal coffers of an estimated \$12 billion annually. That is a big problem. This year Revenue Canada has been going after waitresses in Atlantic Canada. That is not a big problem.

The big problem is the tax evasion involved in the sponsorship scandal itself and the large amounts of cash that Liberal fat cats have siphoned out of taxpayers' pockets. Will the minister get his priorities straight and apply the same rigorous rules to his Liberal cronies that he applies to struggling Atlantic Canadian waitresses?

● (1500)

[Translation]

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform the member that the underground economy is indeed a very big problem. It is one of my department's priorities. I am sure the member will be happy to learn that we are working very hard on this issue.

[English]

Mr. Brian Pallister (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, he should be the minister of ostriches.

While Liberals leave bags of cash on restaurant tables, the minister chooses to go after the people who wait on those tables. Hiring and favouring his friends is one thing; going Liberal light on tax enforcement is quite another.

The Gomery commission has exposed a litany of Liberal money laundering and tax evasion. Will the minister finally get his act together and commit to a full tax audit of all those individuals involved, whether they are Liberals or not?

[Translation]

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his second very good question. I can tell him in all sincerity that the department is very serious about its work. In fact, in his most recent budget, the Minister of Finance added \$30 million a year to strengthen the tax system in this country.

* * *

MEMBER FOR NEWTON—NORTH DELTA

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in the tape affair, the government is using the following line of defence: the Conservative member approached them, he wanted to sell his vote and the government refused to make an offer. That is their version, and they are nodding in agreement. This is an offence under the Criminal Code.

I want to know why, when the Prime Minister realized this was a criminal offence, he did not call the RCMP and file a complaint?

[English]

Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if members believe a criminal offence is being committed and if they have information in relation to an alleged criminal offence, I would encourage everyone in the House to provide information to the relevant police authority and jurisdiction.

As we have said over and over again in the House, it would be completely inappropriate for us or for anyone in the House to ask the RCMP to initiate an investigation. It is up to the RCMP and the RCMP alone to decide whether it will initiate any investigation.

[Translation]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as a matter of fact, as soon as we learned of a possible criminal offence, we informed the RCMP. I wonder why the Prime Minister, who had known about this potential criminal offence for 48 hours already, chose not to inform the RCMP and instead continued to play the game.

Is it not because he expected to resolve the matter under the table, in keeping with Liberal tradition, instead of advising the RCMP? Is this not the real reason?

[English]

Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member has himself indicated from his comments, he and perhaps others in the House contacted the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. If they have information or if they believe an alleged offence has been committed, it is quite appropriate for them to contact the Royal Canadian Mounted Police with that information. It is then up to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and it alone to decide whether it will initiate an investigation.

* * *

SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government shut down the public accounts committee last spring in order to hold an election because it really feared the truth about the sponsorship scandal. Now it has tied Justice Gomery's hands by including clause (k) in the terms of reference which stipulate that he cannot assign blame in his conclusions. Canadians deserve the whole truth.

When will the government give Justice Gomery the proper tools to finally get to the bottom of this Liberal corruption?

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government gave Justice Gomery the right to name names and assign responsibilities when the Gomery commission was established. Section 13 of the Inquiries Act says the commissioner is entitled to draw conclusions as to whether there has been misconduct and who may be responsible for it. In his own words, Justice Gomery said:

—I am entitled to draw conclusions as to whether there has been misconduct and who may be responsible for it.

The fact is Justice Gomery has the right to name names and assign responsibilities. We are looking forward to him doing exactly that.

Routine Proceedings

•(1505)

Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I noticed that the minister seems to use the convenience of the Gomery testimony in his own allegation to interpret as he wishes. On the one hand Gomery has the ability to name names, yet clause (k) says he does not. On the other hand the minister wishes to bring forward a motion that suggests that he should have the opportunity to name names.

He cannot have it both ways. Canadians want the answers. They want the truth. They want to get to the bottom of it. They do not want more Liberal corruption. They want answers and they want dollars.

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am not certain there was a question there, but clause (k) does urge the commission not to indicate criminal or civil liability. That is consistent with most royal commissions. There is a reason for that. It is because the Supreme Court ruling has said specifically that royal commissions or judicial inquiries ought not to assign criminal or civil liability.

Beyond that, there are criminal and civil processes before the courts now. They are proceeding well. We look forward to those being resolved as Justice Gomery completes his work, and as he names names and assigns responsibilities.

* * *

[Translation]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, public transit is key to meeting our Kyoto commitment. It eases congestion, gives young people and seniors more independence, and helps millions of employees get to work each day.

Could the Minister of State please tell the House how the new deal for cities and communities will strengthen public transit in our communities?

Hon. John Godfrey (Minister of State (Infrastructure and Communities), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was delighted to announce the allocation of \$800 million for public transit systems across Canada this morning. This is new funding, over and above the \$5 billion we have already committed to municipalities through the gas tax.

Seventy per cent of Canadians have access to public transit services, so this announcement is good news for communities of all sizes.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

•(1510)

[English]

GRAIN TRANSPORTATION

Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 32(2) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, a document entitled “Monitoring the Canadian Grain

Handling and Transportation System Annual Report” for the 2003-04 crop year.

* * *

[Translation]

ORDER IN COUNCIL APPOINTMENTS

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, order in council appointments recently made by the government.

* * *

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I also have the honour to table the government's response to two petitions.

* * *

[English]

FIRST NATIONS OIL AND GAS AND MONEYS MANAGEMENT ACT

Hon. Ethel Blondin-Andrew (for the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-54, an act to provide first nations with the option of managing and regulating oil and gas exploration and exploitation and of receiving moneys otherwise held for them by Canada.

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

* * *

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian delegation of the Canada-U.S. Interparliamentary Group respecting its participation at the Canadian-American Border Trade Alliance Conference entitled “Canadian/U.S. Border: A Unified Focus” held in Ottawa, April 24-26, 2005.

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the report of the parliamentary delegation of the Canadian Branch of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie, the APF, on its participation at the meeting of the Parliamentary Affairs Committee of the APF in Damascus, Syria, on April 25 and 26, 2005.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Hon. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present the 40th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs concerning the membership of certain committees of the House.

[English]

If the House gives its consent, I intend to move concurrence in the 40th report later this day.

HEALTH

Ms. Bonnie Brown (Oakville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 13th report of the Standing Committee on Health. Your committee has studied Bill C-420, an act to amend the Food and Drugs Act, which includes the definitions of “drug” and “food”, and requests an extension of 30 sitting days to further consider the bill.

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Hon. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the House gives its consent, I move that the 40th report on the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs presented to the House earlier this day be concurred in. For the benefit of hon. members, this deals with a change of membership to committees.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PETITIONS

FISHERIES

Mr. John Cummins (Delta—Richmond East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure to present 18 petitions today from people throughout British Columbia, including Qualicum Beach, Kamloops, Whistler, Sointula, Westbank, Ladner, Port Hardy, and the list goes on.

These folks are concerned with the management of the Fraser River fishery. They note that there has been really no change since the disastrous mismanagement of the fishery last year. They are still calling on Parliament to conduct a judicial inquiry into that management.

● (1515)

MARRIAGE

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

The petitioners would like to draw to the attention of the House that the majority of Canadians believe that fundamental matters of social policy should be determined by elected members of Parliament and not by the unelected judiciary, and that it is the duty of Parliament to define marriage.

Therefore, the petitioners call upon Parliament to use all possible legislative and administrative measures, including the invocation of section 33 of the charter, commonly known as the notwithstanding clause, to preserve and to protect the current definition of marriage as being the legal union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.

Mr. Darrel Stinson (Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition from my constituents of Okanagan—Shuswap.

The petitioners note that this House passed a motion in 1999 affirming the definition of marriage as the union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others. Therefore they request that the traditional definition of marriage be upheld.

AUTISM

Mr. Lee Richardson (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition on behalf of citizens of Canada, mostly from Calgary in this case, who are concerned about children suffering from autism spectrum disorder.

Specifically, the petitioners request that the government consider amending the Canada Health Act and corresponding regulations to provide therapy under the act as a medical necessity, including IBI, that is, intensive behavioural intervention, and also to contribute to the creation of academic chairs at a university in each province to teach IBI/ABA treatment at the undergraduate and doctoral levels.

MARRIAGE

Mr. Dale Johnston (Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition from some 300 people from Bluffton, Winfield, Rimbey, Westrose and points west in my riding.

The petitioners call upon the government to allow, in the same sex issue, a free vote by all members of Parliament and an opportunity for those members to petition their constituents to find out how to vote on such a matter and the opportunity to vote freely on that same matter.

ASSISTED SUICIDE

Mr. Pat O'Brien (London—Fanshawe, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition from some 1,000 citizens of London, Ontario and the district around London.

These people call on the Government of Canada to uphold current laws and take all necessary steps to uphold the sanctity of life. In this case in particular, they call on the government to ensure that there are no steps taken to promote assisted suicide and euthanasia.

Routine Proceedings

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Derek Lee (Scarborough—Rouge River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by a number of constituents in my riding and the surrounding area whereby they bring attention to the murder of Mr. Dharmeratnam Sivaram of Sri Lanka, a journalist. They condemn that murder.

They call upon the House to urge for an independent investigation into the murder. They urge the global community to do what it can to safeguard the safety of other Sri Lankan journalists in that country.

AUTISM

Mr. Rob Anders (Calgary West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting a petition on behalf of 45 people in my riding. The petition concerns children who suffer from autism spectrum disorder. The petitioners talk about the unconscionable waiting lists for these individuals.

The petitioners ask us to amend the Canada Health Act and the corresponding regulations especially so that Canadian professionals would no longer be forced to leave Canada to receive academic training in this field.

• (1520)

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition from my riding of Langley in British Columbia.

The petition states that the rate of children being diagnosed with autism is high and is increasing at an alarming rate. Currently one in 195 children has autism.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to amend the Canada Health Act to include autism treatment as a medically necessary treatment. They also ask that Parliament create academic chairs at a university in each province to teach autism training.

IMMIGRATION

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition from the greater Vancouver branch of the Sponsor Your Parents group.

The petitioners are from Vancouver, Burnaby and the lower mainland and draw to our attention the fact that there has been a huge reduction in the number of parents who are allowed to come to Canada as a part of sponsorship.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to increase the quotas of parental immigration admissions, reduce the processing time of parental immigration applications and treat all nations equally.

MARRIAGE

Mr. Bill Matthews (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I take pleasure today in presenting a petition on behalf of 136 petitioners from the riding of Avalon in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The petitioners ask Parliament to define marriage in federal law as being a lifelong union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others. I am pleased to present this petition on their behalf.

Mr. Marc Godbout (Ottawa—Orléans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to table a petition from some of my constituents asking the government to maintain the traditional definition of marriage.

Mr. Merv Tweed (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition on behalf of my constituents, mostly from Virden and Oak Lake.

The petitioners are requesting that the definition of marriage be a lifelong union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.

RURAL POST OFFICES

Mrs. Lynne Yelich (Blackstrap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to present an important petition submitted by our postmistress, Marjorie Roach of Dundurn, Saskatchewan.

The petition calls upon the federal government to keep the Dundurn post office open and retain the moratorium on rural post office closures.

CANCER

Mrs. Lynne Yelich (Blackstrap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this petition is submitted by the residents of my riding of Blackstrap who are calling on the government to implement and fund a national strategy on cancer control in collaboration with the provinces and all stakeholders.

IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE PROTECTION ACT

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present to the House today a stack of petitions signed by thousands of Canadians from right across the country.

The petitions deal with the provisions of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act which was passed in this House in 2002.

The House will remember that this act provided that a refugee appeal division would be put into place. The House will also know that that provision of the legislation has still not been honoured by the government even though it is the law of the land.

These thousands of Canadians from across the country are petitioning the House of Commons for the legislation to be honoured by the government and that the refugee appeal division be put into place immediately.

SUDAN

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to table petitions signed by thousands of people from across the country, especially young people, in reference to Darfur.

The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to pressure the UN and gather international support to broaden the mandate of the African Union to allow for intervention under chapter 7 of the UN charter, providing multinational resources to the African Union and provide a strong peacekeeping presence in Darfur.

They also call on the government to provide peacekeepers, training observers and logistical support to complement AU forces in the region to protect innocents, in keeping with the concept of the responsibility to protect.

Government Orders

Further, they call on the government to press the UN and gather international support to bring civil servants implicated in war crimes to trial in the International Criminal Court, to bring perpetrators to justice, and uphold the standards of international law.

[*Translation*]

RURAL POST OFFICES

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pride that I table a petition signed by residents of a small parish in my riding called Haute-Aboujagane.

These people are very concerned about the closure of post offices in rural regions. The postmaster in their small parish, Mr. LeBlanc, has retired and the residents of that community are urging the government to appoint someone to replace him, so that the Haute-Aboujagane post office remains open.

* * *

• (1525)

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.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

[*English*]

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

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

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Hon. Karen Redman (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, discussions have taken place between all parties concerning the recorded division that is scheduled later this day. On a motion from the member for Edmonton—St. Albert concerning the adoption of the second report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. I believe you will find consent for the following motion:

I move:

That the motion to concur in the second report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, moved by the member for Edmonton—St. Albert, be deemed carried on division.

The Speaker: Does the hon. government whip have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.

(Motion agreed to)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT ACT

The House resumed from May 30 consideration of the motion that Bill C-23, An Act to establish the Department of Human Resources and Skills Development and to amend and repeal certain related Acts, be read the third time and passed.

The Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Speaker: 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 Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Speaker: Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

The Speaker: At the request of the chief government whip, the recorded division on the motion will be deferred until the conclusion of government orders later this day.

* * *

• (1530)

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ACT

Hon. Ralph Goodale (for the Minister of Social Development) moved that Bill C-22, An Act to establish the Department of Social Development and to amend and repeal certain related Acts, be read the third time and passed.

Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Don Valley East.

[*Translation*]

Our country has many resources, but everyone agrees that our children are the most important. They are truly our most precious resource, because our children—

The Speaker: I apologize for interrupting the hon. member, but members cannot split their time for the first four speeches without the unanimous consent of the House. If the hon. member wants to ask for unanimous consent, she may do so. Otherwise, she can carry on for the full 20 minutes.

The hon. member for Laval—Les Îles.

Ms. Raymonde Folco: Mr. Speaker, I want to ask for the unanimous consent of the House to continue my speech and also split my time with the hon. member for Don Valley East.

The Speaker: Does the House give unanimous consent for the hon. member to split her time with the hon. member for Don Valley East?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Ms. Raymonde Folco: Mr. Speaker, as I said, this country has many resources, but everyone agrees that none is more precious and more important than our children. They represent the hopes and dreams of families, communities and the entire nation. The vitality of our country, Canada, depends on these, the adults of tomorrow.

This is what lies behind our government's desire to assume the huge responsibility of providing our children with the skills, values and beliefs they will need to keep our Canada strong and dynamic.

[*English*]

With these thoughts in mind, the Government of Canada has made children a priority. Even as it wrestled the deficit to the ground during the 1990s, the government continued to invest in children, both for their own sake and for the future of the country.

• (1535)

[*Translation*]

At the same time, we must not lose sight of the fact that our children deserve the opportunity to develop at their own speed and in their own way. They have a great deal to learn from us, but we also can learn a great deal from them if we keep an open mind.

[*English*]

A financial commitment has continued on the part of the Government of Canada into the 21st century. In this fiscal year alone the government will invest more than \$13 billion in programs that support children and families, all yet all this is not enough. The Government of Canada knows that it must do more to support our children.

To that end, I believe the creation of the Department of Social Development will become an important catalyst for action. I urge my colleagues on both sides of the House to support Bill C-22, the legislation before us today that would provide the legal foundation for the new department.

To know what direction to take to support our children, we need to know where we have been. As such, I would like to put the creation

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of the new department into the context of the government's recent work on behalf of Canada's children.

[*Translation*]

It is often said that it takes a whole village to raise a child. Indeed, even though the parents hold the main responsibility for their child's well-being, the rest of the community, the workplace and public institutions can all have a direct or indirect impact on the way a child develops.

We must adopt an investment formula that will support parents and ensure that these other entities work to support families with children.

[*English*]

For more than a decade, the Government of Canada has made it a priority to invest wisely on behalf of children and to do so in partnership with other levels of government. In 1998, for example, the federal, provincial and territorial governments established the national child benefit, an initiative that helped many children.

While this was a huge step, we must go further. To that end, I am pleased to remind members that the Government of Canada announced that it would increase the national child benefit by \$965 million per year until 2007-08.

[*Translation*]

The spirit of cooperation between the federal, provincial and territorial governments was again evident in 1999 with the creation of a national children's agenda. This agenda, with its four key objectives: good health, safety and security, success at learning and social engagement and responsibility, paves the way for a diversity of innovative programs.

Early childhood is the time when the foundations for acquiring skills and the ability to adapt are laid, and these have a life-long impact on learning, behaviour and health. The first few months and years shape an individual's entire life.

Hence the importance of the 2000 early child development agreement.

By virtue of that agreement, the Government of Canada started making annual payments of \$500 million to the provinces and territories with a view to supporting a broad range of initiatives, from community services to prenatal programs. All of these are aimed at getting our children off to the best start possible.

[*English*]

In that regard, there is a pilot project called "understanding the early years initiative". The idea is for 12 communities across the country to gain greater insight into what influences a child's development from the impact of family background to community factors such as the safety and security in a neighbourhood. With better information, communities can make better decisions about which programs will most benefit their children.

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[Translation]

This pilot project has been so successful that the Government of Canada has decided to expand it over the next seven years. Ultimately, up to 100 communities will look at the numerous factors influencing early learning and adopt best practices.

[English]

Research has shown that all young children can benefit from quality early learning programs. In past generations, a child's mother provided much of this emotional and intellectual stimulation but today close to 7 out of 10 mothers with children under the age of 6 are in the workforce. It is not surprising then that 85% of Canadians believe the federal government should help provinces and territories provide affordable, accessible and high quality child care. The Government of Canada is taking action.

[Translation]

In 2003, the federal, provincial and territorial governments concluded a new multilateral agreement on early learning and child care. The Government of Canada has committed to allocating over \$1 billion annually for five years to its provincial and territorial counterparts in order to encourage the creation of new early learning and child care programs.

But this is only the beginning. On the strength of this success, the Government of Canada has committed to partnering with the provincial and territorial governments to establish a national system of early learning and child care.

[English]

Last fall, governments agreed on core national principles to guide the development of early learning and child care that is university inclusive, accessible, developmental and of high quality. In the recent budget, the Government of Canada confirmed its commitment of \$5 billion over five years to enhance and expand high quality developmental early learning and child care in collaboration with provinces and territories.

Just recently, the Minister of Social Development Canada signed agreements in principle with his counterparts in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia to support the development of quality early learning and child care in these provinces.

● (1540)

[Translation]

These agreements clearly illustrate the commitment of both levels of government to creating an important initiative: a system of early learning and child care in each province that benefits children and parents. We will use these agreements as models. We are confident that we will be able to conclude agreements with all the provinces and territories in the coming days and weeks.

[English]

We should not underestimate what these announcements and the ones that will come soon will mean for Canadians. Our children are the future. They deserve positive early learning experiences that will plant the seeds.

[Translation]

That is why we must play a leadership role for children throughout the country. We need a department whose only mission is the social well-being of children, their families and all Canadians. We need a department that can harness existing expertise and generate the added value we need to improve our knowledge and experience and move on to the next level.

[English]

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.): Madam Speaker, last August, at the Olympic Games in Athens, Chantal Petitclerc of Montreal won the gold medal in the women's 800 metre wheelchair demonstration event.

It was a proud moment for all Canadians but it was a particularly sweet victory for Canadians living with disabilities, for not only did Ms. Petitclerc's stunning win demonstrate the potential of the sport for the Olympics, it also demonstrated to Canadians once again how people with disabilities can live rich, fulfilling and rewarding lives.

More than ever before, Canadians living with disabilities are taking their rightful place in our society, whether it is on the track, in the workplace or in their communities, but much work needs to be done to ensure that people with disabilities reach their full potential.

The Government of Canada plays an important role in making sure that happens. It is for that very reason that the government created Social Development Canada. This new department has a mandate to secure and strengthen Canada's social foundations in their many dimensions. These social foundations cannot be solid until people with disabilities fully participate in all the aspects of Canadian life to which they aspire.

That is why it is vital for Bill C-22 to pass into law. The proposed legislation would create the legal foundations for the new department. It would effectively become the building block for the government to strengthen the social foundations of our country. I urge all hon. members to support it so we can move forward on our agenda to promote the rights of Canadians with disabilities.

Before I speak further about the department's role in this challenge, let me say a few words about the nature of disability and how it affects our country. Disabilities are part of human experiences. Some of us are born with disabilities while others experience them later on in life through illness, accident or diseases. Disabilities can affect all of us any time without warning. Today, one in eight Canadians has a disability of some kind, a total of 3.6 million people.

Most commonly, Canadians live with disabilities related to mobility, agility and pain. While disability can affect anyone, it is true that women and aboriginal populations are more likely than others to live with a disability. Since women generally live longer than men, they are also more likely to develop a chronic condition that leads to disability.

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In addition to affecting people directly, disabilities also touch an estimated 2.8 million Canadians who provide support to a family member or a friend with a long term health condition or disability.

We must never lose sight of the need for full inclusion of people with disabilities in all aspects of Canadian society, not just because it is right but because it is just and because people with disabilities have a vast amount of knowledge, talent and expertise that can enrich the quality of Canadian life.

Our country's future prosperity depends on the full and active participation of all Canadians to the best of their ability in our society and economy.

The Government of Canada is committed to achieving the goal of full inclusion. Every year the government provides almost \$7 billion to help meet the needs of Canadians with disabilities. These investments are made in such areas as skills development, learning and employment to disability support, income benefits and tax measures.

Indeed, in Budget 2005 the government is acting on the recommendation of the technical advisory committee on tax measures for persons with disabilities to make the tax system fairer.

Budget 2005 introduces tax measures for persons with disabilities. In 2005-06 these improvements to the tax system will result in \$107 million in investment for Canadians with disabilities and their families, which will grow to \$122 million by 2009-10.

• (1545)

Social Development Canada recently implemented changes to the Canada pension plan disability benefit. Under the new provision, people with disabilities can try going back to work without putting their benefits at risk. If their disability forces them to leave their job again within two years, their benefits will be automatically reinstated.

In addition, budget 2005 improves tax assistance to caregivers and updates the list of medical and disability related expenses that are eligible for the medical expense tax credit.

There has been action in the policy area as well. In 1982, when Canada included physical and mental disability in our Charter of Rights and Freedoms, we became a role model for the world. For the first time in a national Constitution, disabilities were framed as an issue of citizenship and human rights. Since then, the charter has become a key tool to advance the inclusion of people with disabilities in all aspects of Canadian society.

As the Government of Canada advances the disability agenda, Social Development Canada plays a leadership role. On December 3, to mark the International Day of Disabled Persons, the department released several reports, including a comprehensive study called "Advancing the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities 2004". Not only did this study report on the government's progress in advancing disability issues, it also helped Canadians better understand the challenges that still lie ahead.

Since many disability issues fall outside federal jurisdiction, it is vital for the Government of Canada to work in partnership with other levels of government. To that end, last April, federal, provincial and

territorial ministries launched new labour market agreements for people with disabilities. I am pleased to note that in 2004 we increased funding for these new agreements, bringing the total federal contribution to \$223 million annually. These funds will go a long way toward enabling Canadians with disabilities to participate more fully in the labour market.

No government, either on its own or working with other jurisdictions, can effect change single-handedly. That is why the Government of Canada is proud to work in partnership with the voluntary sector and in particular the disability community to build its capacity for policy, research and analysis. It is critical for national disability organizations to represent the voices of Canadians with disabilities and their family caregivers and to communicate their needs and priorities to government.

Social Development Canada is tailor made for these challenges. The legislation before us will provide the legal foundations for the department to carry out its vital work. I urge all hon. members to join me in supporting Bill C-22 so that we can move forward on our agenda for a truly inclusive society.

Mr. Merv Tweed (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to speak today on Bill C-22. I wish to advise the House that the member for Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar provided me with some of the information, as she sits on that committee.

Many Canadians may know, or they may not, that these programs fall under the old Human Resources and Development Canada department, or HRDC. Anyone who has followed the history of this department will certainly bear witness to the fact that institutional changes needed to be made. They were required to fix the many problems within the department as it existed. Canadians were tired of Liberal boondoggles and were demanding that business not continue as usual. The Liberals were wasting billions through the department and spending dirty money elsewhere at the time. Changes were clearly needed.

Changes were required, and while the case was never really made that a full division, split and overhaul of the department was needed, there was no question that Canadians could not afford a repeat of the boondoggles of the past. That said, I am still not sure if this legislation prevents either of those things from happening.

Normally departments are merged to save money, so one can only assume, and I think Canadians can only assume, that splitting this department will cost taxpayers unnecessarily. During a briefing on this legislation, the question was asked but never answered. Perhaps now the government has an answer. How much will these changes cost in addition to what we have had before?

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Unfortunately, the Liberal government started the split long before it brought the bill to Parliament. In effect, the Liberals put the cart before the horse. As we have seen with other departments that the Liberals have split without consulting, I guess they believe it is probably better to ask for forgiveness than get permission.

I have to say that their attitude and way of doing business does not surprise me. The current government has made a habit of circumventing Parliament and has developed a reactionary approach to everything it does. Instead of being leaders and taking a proactive approach to the leadership of the nation, the Liberals continue to run around trying to put out fires by throwing money at them. While it has been proven to be an unsuccessful approach, they blindly continue.

If we were to oppose the legislation, the cost of reversing the changes already made would likely cost more than it would just to complete the split. In effect, the Liberal government has failed to consult with Parliament on the change to HRDC and the creation of social development. To that, we say shame.

Again the Prime Minister has failed to provide Parliament with an opportunity to become more involved and more relevant in the spending of government. Rather than consult us before the fact, we are simply treated as rubber stamps. So much for decreasing the democratic deficit, but then again, even if the committee had recommended alternative action, the Prime Minister has also shown he considers our work irrelevant.

I am thinking of the environment committee and its recommendation not to allow a patronage appointment of a former Winnipeg Liberal candidate to go ahead. The Prime Minister is going ahead anyway. So much for committee work.

This is unacceptable, not just because it silences the members of the House, but because it makes the people we represent irrelevant.

I have to tell Canadians that either the Prime Minister does not consult the House or, when he does, he ignores what members have to say. This was stated earlier: who said the former prime minister was the dictator?

As word spreads of the Liberal government's autocratic ways, more and more Canadians are demanding a return to the democracy for which our veterans fought. Canadians want a Parliament that can and will make binding decisions on important issues. They want their representatives to have more than just a say. They want their representatives to be involved in the decisions and have the power to influence those decisions. I could not agree more with Canadians.

• (1550)

If the Liberals want to improve both the way MPs work and the quality of our work, they need to come to us first, before making changes, not after.

As I said earlier, this department already exists. The minister is at the cabinet table and announcements were in the budget. Exactly what is it that we are being asked to approve in this legislation? From my side of the House, it looks like a done deal.

Before my time runs out, I want to pass along some important information that Canadians should know about. There is a website

that can assist them in accessing any benefits they may be entitled to. This website lists almost every federal and provincial program there is.

To make it easier to determine what applies to an individual, there is a user friendly feature. All one has to do is answer a few questions. It will then short-list the programs that may apply. I am asking the people watching today to grab a pen because I plan to give them that website address shortly.

Before I do, I want to stress that this website address is the subject of one of the most common complaints that most MPs get from those in need. The complaint is that it is too difficult to find, apply for and access programs that already exist.

As I said, this website can be found at canadabenefits.ca. I would encourage all MPs to add it as a link to their websites to give people within their constituencies easier access. The government has a record of taxing the poor but not making it easy or accessible for the poor to get back their hard-earned money when in need. I hope, and I am sure members hope, that this website will help change that.

Social Development has a massive mandate that is guaranteed to touch every single Canadian at some point in their lives. Whether it is seniors, children, families, the disabled, volunteers or participants in the social economy, the new department will have an impact on us and on those close to us. Even if we do not need to turn to the government for assistance today, our pension plans will likely be administered by this department.

As always, we have some serious concerns that a department this large could quickly balloon out of control for this management challenged government, and we are concerned that such a large ministry will be sidetracked by new, large social initiatives. We have already seen social wings fighting over the proposed child care program.

It will take the efforts of MPs, Canadians and especially the people who work at the social development department to ensure that these radical structural changes do not fall off the rails and cost us billions again. Every dollar this government wastes on a new program is a dollar lost to a program that is already in place and quite often underfunded. As I have said before, I hope the government stays on top of the costs associated with this change to ensure they do not get out of hand.

As was pointed out earlier, this new department was born from the split of HRDC into Social Development and HRSDC, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. The government has highlighted the strong coordination, cooperation and co-working arrangements between the two split departments, and it certainly appears to be duplication and overlap to me.

We look forward to the minister perhaps clarifying some of the reasons why the old department could not do what the new ones can or are asked to do and also how much it will save Canadians. This has been asked before, but it has yet to be answered.

I suspect the savings will not prevail. I cannot see how new letterhead, computer systems, websites and the like save anyone any money. In fact, the departments already carry a lot of overlap and duplication. Information is available on both the SD and the HRSDC websites. Yet again it begs the question of why a single department does not make sense over two. I will ask—and I will hope—the government to come up with that creative answer.

• (1555)

Some of my colleagues will speak to this bill also and I believe that they share the same concerns as I do for Canadians in need. The government needs to ensure timely, properly supported services to those under duress. Canadians do not want hassles, delays and excuses. They want access and they want help.

• (1600)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague. I am trying to understand, but I still do not understand and I am sure I am not the only one here to not understand. Why do they want to split this department? Would the hon. member have an idea? I see nothing whatsoever to indicate any urgency or distinction. I am trying to understand the logic behind this bill, but I do not.

I would invite my colleague, if he has seen something I and I am sure many of us have not, to convince us that splitting the department is an intelligent idea, something I have my doubts about, I would very much like to hear what he has to say.

[*English*]

Mr. Merv Tweed: Madam Speaker, as I stated in my opening remarks, there is no logic. In fact, when governments are looking at trying to create benefits and savings for departments, usually they merge them. Perhaps the government could answer to this better than I, but I suspect that a promise was made to somebody that another department would be created for a member of the government.

There is no logic that I can see. In fact, we have seen so far increased costs. We have not seen a government come forward with a plan that is going to show exactly how it is going to work and cooperate in the same functions that it used to. It is very frustrating for people who need to access the programs that are available.

We will continue to chase the government, as I suspect the member will, to ensure that the money that is being allocated to these departments is actually reaching the people it is intended to serve.

Mr. Barry Devolin (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague mentioned that in recent months we have seen a government that is willing, on regular occasion, to ignore the wishes of Parliament. Given that it was only a few months ago that this House voted against bills that would split the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, basically two similar bills were brought forward to create two new ministries. Members of Parliament defeated both of those bills. The government summarily chose to ignore those decisions and to proceed anyway.

I have two questions. Does my colleague think that this process that we are going through is relevant at all, given our recent experience? Does he believe that the government will probably go

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ahead and do what it wants to do, regardless of how members of Parliament vote on these two related bills?

Mr. Merv Tweed: Madam Speaker, that is the issue for all of Canada. A government's time and days here have to be numbered if it does not listen to the members who are duly elected and sent here to represent the people, and if it is not prepared to move forward and listen to what elected MPs have to say. It is very frustrating.

As frustrating as it is for us, imagine how frustrating it is for Canadians to see this happen. They elect people. They give them the responsibility to act on their behalf, and when we do as MPs, it is ignored by the government. The government, whose Prime Minister has claimed is the leader of democratic reform in this country, then turns around and totally ignores the will and wishes of not only the MPs in this House but of the Canadian public.

It is a recipe for disaster and in a lot of cases the debate that we are having on this particular issue is irrelevant. It is something that the government has chosen to move forward and do, with or without permission of the members of Parliament or without the approval of Canadians, and that, as I said earlier, is shameful.

• (1605)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to comment on a question earlier by a member opposite about the reason for dividing this very large department of Human Resources Canada.

It is the government's response to members whose constituents told them they could not deal with Human Resources Canada, it was so big. It was a huge department with responsibilities so varied they should not have been in a single department weighing heavily on the shoulders of one person, the minister.

It must be remembered that the Department of Social Development, once it is created, aims to focus solely on the social development of the people of Canada, especially and very specifically the social, emotional and physical development of very young children. That is what I said in my speech a little earlier this afternoon. It is a department with a very specific objective.

This is why it is important to split the department, to give the new department a very specific objective.

[*English*]

Mr. Merv Tweed: Madam Speaker, obviously, governments have motives for everything that they do. The real issue is that the government never consulted with members of the House. It moved forward on this issue. They are operating as two individual departments now without the authority or the approval of the House and that is the issue.

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Governments that act that way are irresponsible and are not representing the people and not giving us, as elected officials, the opportunity to have some input into the decisions that are made. I stated very clearly that government members put the cart before the horse. All we are saying to the government is that when it continues to do that and it continues to neglect and not listen to what members of Parliament are saying and what Canadians are saying, it does so at its own peril.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak about the establishment of this new Department of Social Development. I sit on the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills Development, Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities. The Bloc Québécois has found this to be a very serious issue. Later I might get into the Liberal government's hidden agenda regarding the creation of this new department.

This new department has an unstated mission: to invade provincial fields of jurisdiction. Earlier, we were told that the reason for establishing it was to be more responsive to the expectations of the various target groups of the Department of Human Resources and Skills Development.

At the same time, this is just shuffling government employees around. The overall number of departmental employees will remain approximately the same. Out of the 23,947 who worked at Human Resources Development Canada, 10,037 were reassigned to the Department of Social Development and 13,910 remain at the Department of Human Resources and Skills Development. So, public servants were shuffled.

But the unstated mission also has to do with the Liberal government's visibility with organizations. A Liberal member spoke earlier about people with disabilities, saying that they wanted to negotiate with the voluntary and community sectors. We can see what direction the Liberal government has taken with respect to the social development sector. It is very clear.

The sponsorship program, which was providing the government with some visibility in cultural organizations or at events, has been abolished. With that option no longer available, the government is now going to encroach on fields of provincial jurisdiction to make itself visible to the organizations in the various provinces, and in Quebec in particular.

Allow me to doubt the government's great intentions. The objectives may be described as worthwhile. It is true that the provinces have been financially choked by the federal government ever since I was elected here, in 1993. We in opposition have all experienced the drastic cuts to provincial transfers for health, education and social services made through the Canada social transfer.

We know very well that the support for health under the Canada social transfer is now down to a mere 20%. For education and social development, contributions amount to about 11.5%.

The game, therefore, is extremely clear. The organizations, individuals and client groups they intend to serve will be held hostage to the good will of the federal Liberal government. This will

be a great way for the latter to remain visible, hold the purse strings and thereby help the provinces overcome its difficulties in responding to the various client groups. We have not mentioned the fiscal imbalance. And there is the rub. I want to repeat what our finance critic said at a Quebec City board of trade session about the dysfunction of fiscal federalism, the cost of the fiscal imbalance and its consequences. Here is what he said:

• (1610)

“The fiscal imbalance between Ottawa and Quebec and the provinces is clearly a dysfunction of fiscal federalism that cannot be permanently resolved through individual agreements or mere increases in federal cash transfers. A new balance must be struck. Overall, the federal and provincial governments jointly collect sufficient taxes to fund public services and meet new needs.”

“Since 1998, there was no less than \$140 billion in new federal initiatives, in addition to a cumulative end-of-year surplus of \$70 billion. So, our financial leeway totals \$210 billion in secret funds that are not subject to public debate.”

The numbers have been manipulated since 1997-98. We are told that there is no surplus, but in fact, this is not true. The federal government is keeping the surpluses for itself while the provinces are unable meet their objectives. They are the ones providing services to the different client groups. In fact, their actions are dictated by institutions, by a Parliament that determines orientations and public policies. So it is extremely difficult for the provincial governments to set long-term strategies, particularly with regard to social development.

They are trying to convince us that the federal government knows best in this sector, when in fact it does not even have the expertise. This is why they wanted to create a new Department of Social Development, and made sure to have a big enough surplus to be able to fund it.

I have some doubts about the funds allocated to this department. They say the total will be approximately \$55 billion, to which another \$2 billion have recently been added. Yet they had said that this new department would not cost any more. Let us see how it will be run. There is an initial \$55 billion allocated to this department, but there is a list of desired clientele, services they want to deliver, new programs they want to set up. I noted yesterday evening, when we were looking at supply for 2005-06, that there is not yet any figure for certain of the government's social development initiatives. I doubt very much that this budget will stop at \$55 billion.

If they want to be serious and really do some social development, then they need to also acknowledge the difficulty the provinces are having keeping their heads above water and serving their various clientele.

The cost of the fiscal imbalance is enormous. We are told that, between 2004-05 and 2009-10, that is a six-year period, it will have cost the Government of Quebec \$24 billion. Imagine how that much money could have enabled the Government of Quebec to better serve its various clientele and thus to ensure some degree of equity for everyone. Year after year, the shortfall will keep on growing if this problem is not addressed.

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And that includes the health agreement. To those listening, and to the people in our ridings, \$501 million for health may seem a huge amount. It is, in fact, but the amounts in this agreement correspond to the cost of nine days of operating the system. It seems a lot, but when we take a closer look, it is clear that even with an additional \$279 million for equalization, this is but a drop in the bucket compared to the major social and economic needs in the provinces that must be met.

Enough of this great lesson in social solidarity the federal government is trying to give us. They did not hesitate to slash the Canada social transfer in 1997-98. We have never been treated to so much social solidarity by this government.

• (1615)

The consequences have been very serious in terms of the fiscal imbalance and Quebec's basic needs, such as funding for the health care network. It is very difficult to provide. No consensus can be reached without funding, because priorities have to be met.

Education is underfunded. Investment of \$1 billion annually would be required. The agreed figure of \$500 million annually fell far short and was, in fact, ridiculous in the context of the support needed to fund health care.

Public infrastructures are out of date, intermodal transport remains at the project stage, social housing is significantly lacking, there are gaps in job training and insufficient resources, immigrant integration, essential in view of the labour shortage, is inadequate, and so on.

I spoke of these issues rather than those relating to social development today, because they might be the solution. However, the government is looking for complex and difficult solutions with a department that has policies and objectives to suit each of its various clients.

Resolving the problem of the fiscal imbalance, for example, would be less complex and costly than a new department, which will probably be much greedier than it is at the moment.

As I noted in the studies of the votes yesterday, there were not enough figures available to say how much the government would be spending on the various initiatives. There are initiatives, for example, relating to the volunteer sector, such as new horizons. We did not even see the figures they referred to. The amount mentioned was \$25 million. However, we noted that \$7 million was mentioned when the votes were studied.

Are they going to ensure these millions are invested this year and not in 2007-08? Yesterday, we would have liked answers to these questions, but the minister did not have enough time to answer all the questions we asked him.

The case is the same for caregivers. My colleague on the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills Development, Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities will certainly mention this later. This plan to help the provinces with social development is rather dubious. If the government respected provincial jurisdictions and if Quebec had the programs, we could opt out with full compensation, without conditions or negotiations.

Just look at the entire saga going on right now with the child care system. It is ridiculous when you consider that Quebec set up a child care system to the tune of \$1.7 billion so far, and the federal government is imposing accountability conditions. In addition, we know they are keeping money in their coffers for the next two years to see how the provinces will respond and deliver service to the public.

Given that we now have almost 200,000 child care places available, we obviously do not have any lessons to learn from the federal government, since it even asked for Quebec's expertise on the matter. They should be paying us for our expertise, which cost Quebec taxpayers a great deal, instead of making us wait seven months. The Bloc Québécois denounces both the federal government's attitude and that of the Government of Quebec, a Liberal government, which wants the money with no strings attached.

It is not just the conditions on child care, but also the attitude toward the negotiations and the conditions. If we accept this for child care, then we are setting a precedent for every other agreement in every other sector. The federal government would like Quebec to make concessions and accept these conditions. This will not work in other sectors; it will not mesh with the social and economic issues in Quebec.

It is a question of principle. That is why we must not sign with the federal government, which is trying to impose an accountability program and conditions, especially in sectors where the Government of Quebec has invested billions of dollars. I could even say that the federal government is making money on child care.

• (1620)

Families that have access to the \$5 to \$7 a day child care system cannot claim tax credits. Since the system was put in place in Quebec in 1998, the federal government has saved \$1 billion because the deductions are not large enough to generate a tax refund. Each year for the past six years, Quebec has been providing this Liberal government with \$1 billion to fund the child care network across Canada. This means that thousands of families in Quebec are not getting tax refunds. The federal government could have been grateful to Quebec for the \$1 billion saving in income taxes and given us the money back. It could have thanked Quebec for having been proactive in that area.

Those who want to be respectful of their partners—whether between friends or in a couple—have to show appreciation for effort and initiative. It is time to stop using negotiations for blackmail purposes. The government has been negotiating with Quebec for seven months. It boasts about our being world leaders. The OECD has praised us for having implemented this kind of system in Quebec. After tapping into our expertise, the federal government expects us to send all our revenues its way, without any compensation. At the same time, we have to do as the federal government says and meet its terms and conditions in order to receive money. That is a very poor way of showing respect for one's partner, especially when the partner in question has made it to the major leagues and made extra efforts.

Government Orders

We will oppose the creation of the new Department of Social Development, first because of its unstated purpose, which is to interfere in provincial jurisdictions. If other provinces wish to set up a national child care system and accept the conditions imposed by the federal government, fine. We have absolutely no problem with that. That is not the issue. We are talking about the possibility for Quebec not to join in, if it is not in its best interests to do so. After all, this is one of its jurisdictions. Indeed, the Constitution of 1867 clearly states that social development, which includes health, education and social services, is a provincial jurisdiction.

All governments in Quebec, whether federalist or sovereignist, have been unanimous on this issue. The National Assembly passed many resolutions condemning this desire to interfere in provincial jurisdictions. The fiscal imbalance is still being unanimously condemned in Quebec. Now, 83% of Quebecers understand what the fiscal imbalance is all about.

With its hand on its heart, the government is telling us that it wants to help all the various groups. That is a laudable objective, but the government is not taking the appropriate means to be effective and to meet the needs of these groups.

We saw the results of this approach after attempts were made to set up other programs. Three or four weeks ago, the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills Development, Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities discussed extensively the program set up by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada regarding manpower training. There were problems with this program. The NDP had asked the committee to review this issue. Following that, the committee tabled a report on the ineffectiveness of the implementation of a new management process, which was not totally fair to the various groups affected.

The federal government would have us believe that having two departments, two types of programs serving the same groups, is the most effective and economic approach. I beg to differ.

• (1625)

The purpose of this new department is to blackmail some groups and money will be available when they so decide, while the provinces have to meet specific objectives.

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member covered a lot of issues and I would like to make a few comments and ask her some questions.

My first comment may be in a generic sense. The member had the words right, and one of the words she used was accountability. Any government that receives taxation revenue or revenue from other sources from taxpayers needs to be responsible and accountable and ensure that those moneys are used wisely. If those moneys are not used wisely or are not necessary for the services that are to be provided, then taxes should be lowered.

Does the member agree that if the Government of Canada raises money, regardless of how that money is used or transferred, there is still an accountability and that accountability may reflect itself in terms of standards or conditions under which the moneys would be transferred to a province?

She also mentioned intrusion into provincial jurisdiction. Roads, bridges and sewers are traditionally associated with provincial, regional and municipal governments. In fact, they have their own tax bases to raise the revenues to deal with those. Why then would the Government of Canada take an interest in transferring infrastructure moneys, gas tax reductions, GST reductions for the general purpose of provinces, regions and municipalities, if it did not somehow reflect in terms of supporting the economic performance of all regions to the benefit of all Canadians? It is a good outcome. There is no question the jurisdiction is there.

If the member feels that this intrusion into provincial jurisdiction has to be dealt with, is she suggesting that Quebec should not get infrastructure money, or day care money or money for tax rebates because they are related to provincial jurisdiction? She cannot have it both ways. I would be interested to hear the member's position on that.

With regard to Bill C-22 specifically, I sensed some concern that the department is still too large notwithstanding that it has been partitioned somewhat. There are now two new ministers in related areas. Is her concern that the dollar value is still very high which may reflect the volume of activity? In terms of the scope of responsibilities, I would have thought they would have been reduced because of the additional ministerial responsibilities.

Could the member clarify whether her concern is that the areas of responsibility are too large or is she concerned about the dollars?

• (1630)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: Madam Speaker, it is very easy to come off as someone who is unconcerned with how the governments spend money.

I mentioned accountability earlier, and I think that, instead of creating new programs or invading areas of jurisdiction, we need to resolve once and for all the fiscal imbalance. Here again, the federal government has given itself significant leeway. The leeway for new federal initiatives is \$140 billion, while the provinces lack the resources they need to meet the public's everyday needs.

I find it insulting that the federal government then demands that the provinces report back to it. It is not that we should not be accountable to the public. I am saying, rather, that the federal government is acting in an area outside its jurisdiction. It may well ask for the provincial governments to be accountable up to a certain point. However, the federal government collects \$40 billion from Quebec taxpayers. If subjugation is required in order for this money to be redistributed in our areas of jurisdiction, then clearly we are at odds here.

Government Orders

People could easily conclude that I am not concerned about accountability. I am well aware that the provincial governments must also report on expenditures made with taxpayer money. However, do we ever see protesters here opposing various federal policies? It is extremely rare. We need to mobilize everyone in Canada.

The protests are happening in the provinces, which provide those public services. And the victims of this potential fiscal mismanagement are the people. If the public were concerned, perhaps because it thought the government had mismanaged or abused the public purse, it could go to the National Assembly.

The federal government is a big bubble. No one ever worries and there are never any protesters knocking at the door. When the universities make major demands, they do not come here. Sometimes, they do, but there is no real impact. I think that the best way to ensure how the money is spent is to give it to the provincial governments.

That is what we are arguing in Quebec. When the government goes too far or not far enough or not in the direction the public would like in connection with social development, for example, the individuals concerned will call the provincial government on it.

The federal government's centralizing tendency is not a winning strategy. That is for sure. What pleases some provinces may displease others. Timing, issues and priorities vary from province to province. The leaders in provincial legislatures are from different political parties with different issues. They are democratically elected.

Even the federalists said in committee that it was not federalism. The centralizing federalism they are trying to have us accept here is not in line with Quebec's realities, nor with other realities outside Quebec. Voices of discord are being heard increasingly in Canada.

So, we would have expected flexibility. Since Trudeau, we have been promised greater flexibility. There was the great Canadian love-in evening in the 1995 referendum, the loving day, as it was called. Mentalities and approaches were going to be changed, the various premiers promised.

• (1635)

We have never seen one ounce of flexibility in this government, but it is asking the provinces to be flexible. The question of the government's lack of desire to resolve the fiscal imbalance is not to be raised. It is because it has enough manoeuvring room to bring the provinces to their knees, when it wants, as it likes.

I have not mentioned the gasoline tax or the way it was negotiated. In this file, there was a little more heart. In the end, funding was cut. It in no way resolves the whole matter of Quebec's infrastructures. As I have said, the network is lacking. We do not have enough money to develop public transit and are obliged to beg.

Mayors are being seen as visiting the federal government cap in hand. I am not saying this is how they should be seen, but it is the image the federal government likes to give them. It likes to see the mayors coming for money. They usually approach the provincial government, the Government of Quebec, in our case. That way negotiations are more direct.

They have neglected to say they do not want to do business any more with the provincial governments, but rather with the social players. That is the unstated goal of this government.

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): 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 Okanagan—Coquihalla, Foreign Affairs; the hon. member for Windsor West, the Canada-U.S. Border.

[*English*]

Mr. Tony Martin (Sault Ste. Marie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the bill this afternoon because I have some important things to say. I hope, ultimately, to engage the Liberals in some conversation on this and the Bloc.

What we have in front of us is an opportunity and if we are not careful we will miss it. We have an opportunity to establish a couple of new departments that could deliver some services and programs to the people of Canada if it is done properly and effectively.

Earlier today we debated Bill C-23 which we will be voting on soon. Now we are speaking to Bill C-22. The two bills came forward to divide a department that was in deep trouble a few years ago through its spending habits, lack of accountability and some significant irresponsibility on the part of government and the people within the organization who did not act in a way that reflected the values that this place should represent.

We are here debating the wisdom of dividing a huge department, Human Resources Development Canada, into two departments. On first blush, it may be a good thing to do because perhaps a big department should be broken down into smaller, more manageable bits.

However the way the government is going about this is troubling. The two departments are already there and I think one of the departments has had three different ministers so far. Nevertheless, we must work with this and at committee try to bring forward some suggestions as to amendments that could be made but it is the same old attitude coming from the government.

Where initially we were in support of dividing up Human Resources Development Canada into two new departments because we thought it was a good thing to do in terms of being more manageable and the possibility of a new approach, we then moved to a position where we could not.

I want to talk for a few minutes this afternoon about why we now find ourselves in a position of having to oppose the two bills and the establishment of these two departments.

Government Orders

I also want to say that we are always open to discussion, particularly in the new arrangement that has evolved over the last couple of weeks in terms of the Liberals and the New Democrats trying to find ways to work together on behalf of the people of Canada and on behalf of communities and to do some things that would actually be helpful in the delivery of programs and services.

We are not opposed to the bills from an ideological perspective nor are we opposed strictly on principle. We are opposed for some very practical reasons. For myself, personally, it flows out of some of my experiences in committee as we tried to bring forward some amendments to the bills that we thought would situate them better to actually do the job that we know, and the government knows and the people of Canada know, needs to be done out there under the heading of Human Resources and Skills Development and Social Development.

A lot of work needs to be done in the area of training. Changes to the EI system are needed, on which I know the Bloc members, as well as my colleague from New Brunswick, have worked very hard. However this will not get done simply by creating a new department if we do not include a framework, a commitment and some legal requirements to actually do something different on behalf of the people of the different provinces and of the country.

If the ministers and government members are listening, some of whom have been actively engaged in the debate, I want to say that we are willing to come to the table, sit down and work out ways to make these bills more palatable, more attractive to us in terms of support, but it will require some substantial give on the part of the government on some fronts, which I will talk about in a few minutes.

• (1640)

I do not think one cannot talk about Bill C-23 without talking about Bill C-22. For example, when Bill C-23 came forward we voted on it and it went to committee. In committee, I found, after initiating an investigation into how the new Department of Human Resources and Skills Development was changing the way it called for and ultimately decided on requests for proposals to deliver some of the services, that the same old attitude of "Do as we say. Do not ask any questions. This is the way it will be done. Do not mess with us or we will take action that will not make it too comfortable for you", still existed.

We heard from people who are in the trenches delivering programs on our behalf. When they told us about their experiences of intimidation and harassment when they actually asked questions about the new proposal that was put forward, we began to have some serious concerns.

The Conservatives, the Bloc and some of the Liberals worked very hard on a report that we tabled in the House. The New Democrats and the Bloc appended a minority report to add some of our own concerns that we felt were not captured in the report.

The report now sits with the minister and we want to know what she is going to do with the report. Is she going to respond to some of the issues raised in it? How quickly will she respond? What will be done, in particular from our perspective, to protect those organizations and agencies that were caught up in this flawed process? The department itself referred to it as a process that was flawed.

Several organizations in this country, particularly in Ontario, lost contracts because of this flawed process. So far there has been no indication that any action will be taken to fix the process to ensure organizations can continue to do the good work for which they have developed an expertise and a track record.

If the New Democrats are going to support Bill C-23, which goes along with Bill C-22, we want to hear specifically what the minister is going to do with the report. We want to know what changes she is going to make. We want to know what concrete things we can expect to flow out of the department to indicate it is really serious about taking some action. We do not want what happened in the old HRDC a few years with the billion dollar boondoggle to happen in the new department. We want to sit down and talk with somebody about that before we can support the bills and the government to get them through the House.

Bill C-22, which we are talking about tonight, like Bill C-23, is a bill that the New Democrats once supported and that my party cannot support any longer. At first we recognized it as a housekeeping bill. We saw merit in splitting social policy and social development from HRDC with its scandals. HRDC was too large a department with conflicting responsibilities. We welcomed the new approach and new opportunity for a new department. We saw opportunities to give some prominence to the profoundly important subject of social development.

A few moments ago I heard the member from Quebec express her concern that the government was talking about a type of federalism that does not work for Quebec. I think the government should be engaging the Bloc and the New Democrats in a conversation about what kind of federalism would work for Quebec, particularly where the delivery of social programs and social development in this country is concerned.

Anyone who has spent any time in Quebec or with the Bloc or who has looked at the wonderful programs rolling out in Quebec knows why Quebec and the Bloc are concerned about the government's approach to the delivery of social programs.

• (1645)

The Bloc does not want its programs watered down. It wants to grow them, improve them and make them better. After listening to some of the Bloc members, I have a feeling that what is coming forward from the federal government will water down some of the excellent work that is going on in that province. What the New Democratic Party wants to do is build on that history and make it the reality for all of Canada so that those very good programs that are enshrined in legislation that happen in Quebec, happen for all Canadians.

I hope that in order to get the bill through the House and to finally sanction his department, the Minister of Social Development, who I know is a man of good will, is willing to sit down with us and the Bloc to ask what needs to be done, what needs to be put in the bill and what amendments Bloc members want to bring forward to make this work for them so they can support it.

Government Orders

This will be an exceptional opportunity to finally address some really substantive issues around Canadian social policy, for example its disassembly over the past 10 to 20 years, the Canada assistance plan and the social transfer arrangements with the provinces and territories that is near devoid of understanding, of purpose or of accountability and that fails to protect social program funding against erosion into provincial health care priorities. Those kinds of concerns are of critical importance to us.

I want to take some time to explain why we are no longer supporting the bill and what needs to happen in the department for it to put some real substance into delivering social policy in a holistic community driven fashion.

We saw from the outset a weakness in the bill. It was not defining social development nor was it adequately laying out the mission of the Department of Social Development. There were only vague references to social development and social well-being for Canadians.

I proposed amendments to lay out a definition on social development but did not receive the support of the government. I acknowledge that the department has a decent and well-intentioned minister but, regrettably, there is also a bureaucracy and a Liberal Party that does not know the meaning of collaboration or working together on a progressive agenda for our country.

I guess this is where I stand today after a couple of weeks of some very important, challenging and difficult negotiations back and forth between ourselves and the Liberals on some programs that both of us are now committed to if we can get the budget through the House, a budget that will be good for the people of Canada and for communities, for investments in education, in the environment, in training, in housing and the list goes on, all under the rubric of social development, things for which we as New Democrats came here to fight.

We now see some openness from the Liberal Party to actually entertain and commit itself to doing some of those things, It is dropping the corporate tax break that would have robbed us of the resources we needed to actually do those kinds of things. I am hoping that in that same spirit the minister will be willing to speak with us and the Bloc to see if there is anything that we could do together to give the department the teeth it needs to actually do the job that we know needs to be done.

We have not seen in either Human Resources and Skills Development Canada or Social Development Canada the kind of partnership that is so important in a minority Parliament and we are asking for that to happen now. Even with the new deal on the budget there still, in my experience, and I have a couple of ministries that I am responsible for in terms of being a critic, any real substantial coming together and dialogue around what it is that we can do together to better some of the things that we are working on.

The budget deal for Bill C-48 demonstrates what a minority Parliament can accomplish for the good of Canadians, such as affordable housing, education and more gas tax for municipal infrastructure. Some are saying that it is the minority parliament that has failed when we know better.

● (1650)

It is not the minority Parliament that has failed. It is the Liberal government that too often fails a minority Parliament. Here is a chance for it to prove differently and to show us differently. Minority Parliaments work and can work. They have worked in the past.

We know what the New Democrats were able to achieve for medicare and pensions while working with other parties in other Parliaments. We think we can achieve some things that we will all be proud of here with these bills as well. Contained within these bills is the potential to do some really fabulous things, such as the new national child care program.

Speaking of child care, this is the ministry responsible for child care. This has been another source of great disappointment for our party. We wanted to work with the government on truly creating and enshrining in legislation a high quality, accessible child care and early learning system.

While the first two agreements with NDP governments in Manitoba and Saskatchewan held out promise, last week the quality of the system began to be diluted with an openness to funding for profit subsidies.

We wanted a national child care act. None is forthcoming. If the minister wanted to come and talk to me about that, we could talk about that and it would be helpful in terms of our position on this bill. The government fails to see the potential of working together and finding those on all sides who would support such a bill.

We wanted funding only for not for profit. We are aware of the research. Last night during the debate I asked the minister what research he used to substantiate his decision to leave the funding open to both not for profit and for profit. I did not hear of any that was of any note.

We want studies that quality and accountability are best served in the not for profit sector. We know. We have the research. We have the studies. The practical experience is out there to say that we get better quality.

I know that the minister is sincerely and seriously committed to achieving quality in the new child care system. However, he will not do it, I suggest to him, unless he restricts the funding and frames that in a way that makes it happen for the not for profit sector.

We keep hearing about the big box corporations. I keep raising the subject of big box corporations. We wanted to ensure that big box corporations were prevented from doing their business in Canada with their lower wages and higher child-staff ratios, buying out non-profit and smaller mom and pop operations, and closing centres in rural, northern or isolated areas.

Government Orders

I know the minister shares some of my concerns about big box child care. I know that some of the provincial ministers do as well. We have a profound disagreement on how to deal with those concerns. The minister tells me that his bottom line is a quality standard that can be delivered in either the not for profit or the profit sector.

This is not the experience by and large in Australia or the United States. This is not what the research is telling us about quality care being delivered far more consistently in the not for profit sector, and even in Quebec, that is the case.

Big box child care is waiting to come to Canada. A U.S. corporation has already registered itself to do business in Canada. Three of the five provinces that now have child care agreements do not rule out funding for profit operation. They are Ontario, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador. Only the Manitoba and Saskatchewan NDP governments have made that commitment.

Our party cannot support this bill at this time on many fronts. One is the refusal to accept amendments to this bill for its policy on child care.

I wonder why there could not be a real definition of social development to move our social economy forward? I fear, in the absence of a clear and thoughtful mission, that the department's efforts will be as notable for the important work it is not doing as the responsibilities it is carrying out.

The concept of social development is an idea with critical content and with numerous descriptors. For instance, many of us have advocated for years that the term, as does the concept of social policy, has to contain things often in the past considered economic, as well as things regarded as social.

As no doubt members are aware, failure to develop social policy that recognized this more holistic reality weakened the usefulness of the policy, to say nothing of doing a disservice to principal stakeholders of social policy.

• (1655)

We must do something on this front with this opportunity that we have with this ministry to actually live up to some of the responsibilities that we have out there on the international stage. The United Nations has time and time again, with support from Canada, put in place regulations that call for very basic, fundamental supports for human beings, including housing, food, clothing and shelter.

We have no vehicle anymore in Canada, since the demise of the Canada assistance plan, that gives any legal framework or teeth to the government to demand that provinces, in delivering social services, ensure that all citizens gets what they need to live a quality of life that is up to the kind of standards that we have in this country.

We at this point are opposed to both Bill C-22 and Bill C-23, but we are open, in the spirit of the new cooperation between the government and our party, to discussions to find ways to bring us on board, to make us supportive, and to work with the Bloc on this.

• (1700)

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Bill C-22 is an act to establish the Department of Social Development

and to amend and repeal certain other acts. The member has given a good speech, quite frankly, on the whole subject matter of early learning and child care which we spoke about and debated last night. He was here for some four hours and we spoke about some of the nuances.

There are obviously negotiations that must be held with every province. There is only so much that we can do and we cannot have one model that fits all because every province has a different base to work with. I am a little concerned and I am hopeful that the member would maybe want to reconsider his position on the bill to create the department and not have his position affected by a measure which is included in the budget bill, Bill C-43, which his party supported.

I do not want to get into a debate about child care because that is not the bill we are debating, but I would say to the member that this is a first step. It is \$5 billion over five years with \$700 million in the first year. The premise is that putting the interests of children first is very important and that to deal with one aspect, being quality child care, is important regardless of how it might be delivered. We know that it really costs much more to set up a true, effective, quality national program, but we should work together to build on a starting point because there is only so much we can do with \$5 billion over five years.

Mr. Tony Martin: Madam Speaker, it certainly is something that we do need to consider and discuss. My concern is that if we pass this bill without making substantial amendments to actually give it the capacity to do the job that we all imagine it might be able to do would be a bit like closing the gate after the horses are out. We would then have to recapture that potential and that possibility.

There are some very real concerns in this country about the way that we do social development and the way that we deliver social programs, particularly since the demise of the Canada assistance plan. There is no legal framework anymore to challenge provinces that deliver most of those programs to live up to some of the commitments that we made as a country through the United Nations and through some international pacts around basic, fundamental rights of citizens.

What concerns me is that we are putting the cart before the horse here and we would not do the good work early on that we need to do to maximize the potential for some really important stuff to happen down the road.

Mr. Barry Devolin (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I was interested to hear the member for Sault Ste. Marie on the one hand say that he looks forward to cooperating with the Liberals. He sees the minister as a man of honour who can be worked with, yet specifically, one of the initiatives that was supposed to come out of this ministry, and that I know my colleague from Sault Ste. Marie was really looking forward to, was an actual national child care program.

What cause does he have for optimism that he can rely on the Liberals to actually act on the things that he discusses? Given his recent experience with national child care legislation, which I know he wants and is expecting, what cause for optimism does he have that any of the things that get promised are actually going to be delivered?

Government Orders

• (1705)

Mr. Tony Martin: Madam Speaker, the member is absolutely right and that is my concern. That is why we are not standing here today saying we are supporting this legislation. Unless the minister is willing to sit down with us and perhaps with others and talk with us about how this child care program is actually going to be a national program because it is not at the moment. It is still as patchwork as what we had before. It is one-offs now and bilateral agreements.

We were happy with the initial first two agreements because of some of the framework that they actually had in place, but we need federal legislation to ensure that what flows out the door from here under the guise of a national child care program is rooted in the principles, is delivered by a not for profit system, and that the federal government will be there at the end of the day with the kind of money that is going to be required to support that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have a question for my colleague from Sault Ste. Marie. First, I am glad the NDP has changed its mind on the first reading of the bill. They are currently against Bill C-23, if I have understood correctly.

The reasons they say they are against it are quite questionable. There is a tendency toward greater centralization of national programs. In that sense, my colleague from Québec made our position very clear.

My colleague from Sault Ste. Marie raises the fact that they have reservations about this bill because a legal commitment and framework is needed to improve the services. I tried to follow his reasoning, but I did not really hear anything to that effect.

I understand why he finds it hard to come up with ways to improve it because it is hard to improve something that is not relevant. This bill is not relevant. The only thing it sets out to do is to institutionalize a structure called Social Development Canada in order to justify interfering in programs that do not come under federal jurisdiction.

My question is this. Should the bill pass, does my colleague realize that this is a way of creating a single window, which makes access to services even more difficult and facilitates making cuts to one department or the other?

I refer my colleague to page 280 of the budget to help him see that by passing the budget he would be authorizing the government to cut \$2.4 billion from EI programs alone. We know how much the NDP cares about this issue.

How will they be able to justify authorizing \$2.4 billion in cuts to employment insurance, as outlined on page 280 of the budget?

It is the same thing in other provisions in the budget, where cuts are already planned for the new Department of Social Development.

I would like to know what my colleague from Sault Ste. Marie has to say about this.

• (1710)

[*English*]

Mr. Tony Martin: Madam Speaker, I have no quarrel with the member for Chambly—Borduas. He is absolutely right. There are

inconsistencies and that is what I am looking for. I am looking for a vehicle in the federal government to ensure that those inconsistencies do not continue to happen.

For example, on just one front we have some very real concerns, and I know that Quebec has some concerns and does a good job without a lot of support from the federal government. The availability of legal protection for the poor and disadvantaged in our country rank among the highest in the world. With the repeal of the Canada assistance plan in 1996, Canada no longer has a national framework for protecting basic social and economic rights such as the right to adequate social assistance for all people in need, comparable to the substantive health care guarantees that have been maintained under the Canada Health Act.

Therefore, we are looking for something like the Canada Health Act in this ministry to protect the rights of people to a standard of living and to protect them when they find themselves unemployed, so that they get from the fund what they paid into it in terms of the cost of living for them.

I agree with the member. There are inconsistencies. If we were to work effectively with the minister, we might be able to find a way to reduce the inconsistencies in this ministry and put in place some vehicles that would guarantee and ensure citizens that they would get the things that they are entitled to.

Hon. Eleni Bakopanos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Social Development (Social Economy), Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to once more speak to Bill C-22. I would like to remind the hon. members, especially the member for Sault Ste. Marie who was supportive of the bill, that this recommendation came from a committee of the House. That committee did an exhaustive study and recommended to the House that the department should be split. We tend to forget that, and it was a unanimous report of that committee at that time.

[*Translation*]

I am very pleased to have this opportunity to speak to you today about Bill C-22, an act to establish the Department of Social Development and to amend and repeal certain related Acts. This is a department devoted essentially to social development, which demonstrates the Government of Canada's desire to renew its commitment to social development policies.

Social Development Canada centralizes social policy at the federal level, along with all social programs aimed at strengthening the social infrastructure of Canada.

[*English*]

At Social Development Canada, there is a mission. That mission, in short, is to support the well-being of individuals and families and their full participation in the life of our country.

I would like to also remind members who already have spoken that last night we had four hours to question the minister on the mission of the department and what it does.

Government Orders

I think it is rather disappointing that the NDP, through its critic, has now decided not to be supportive of a measure that came straight from the committee's recommendation and which the government accepted. The opposition always talks about how committees have no relevance in the House, but they do have a relevance when it suits its purposes.

Whether it is a senior, a person with a disability, a family, a child or whether it is the needs of the voluntary sector, Social Development Canada exists to help Canadians live full, complex and rewarding lives. I always say that the department takes us from zero up to the death, from the birth of a Canadian citizen up to the death of the Canadian citizen. We touch their lives through the whole sphere of their lives on this earth.

It does this through income security benefits, through programs that promote inclusion and participation, through funding support to organizations that contribute to Canada's social development and through investments in children and families.

However, we want to go further and move faster in enhancing the quality of life of Canadians by fostering even greater participation in society by alleviating poverty, by ensuring every child can get a good start in life, as is the early learning and child care initiative, and by widening the choices available to Canadians as they go through life's transitions.

Many social issues transcend jurisdictional responsibilities and it is the responsibility of the government to have a national vision. It is certainly not one that is shared by the hon. members from the Bloc. I can understand that. After having done politics in Quebec for 30 years, I do not expect them to be supportive of a national vision when they have a vision that only pertains to Quebec. That is obvious.

However, I am a little disappointed that my colleague from the NDP and my colleagues from the Conservative Party do not transcend jurisdictional situations in which the Bloc, because of its mandate, would not be supportive.

No one level of government or segment of the community on its own can address them in their entirety. An effective response means many different players must work together each using the levers and interventions appropriate to their resources, expertise and jurisdictional responsibilities.

I want to reiterate that we have a collaborative relationship with our colleagues from the provincial and territorial governments. That is what a national government does. It collaborates. It shares its resources. It sits at the table and tries to find solutions for Canadian citizens from the age of zero up to their death.

• (1715)

[*Translation*]

In this way, the departmental vision fits into the partnership framework, a framework that is itself based on consultation, cooperation and commitment and involves the provincial and territorial governments, community organizations and other stakeholders, as well as the people of Canada.

Now for the role of our department. The very core of the responsibilities of Social Development Canada must be a holistic

vision of life on which we can base our reflection and strategic orientation, starting at the beginning: our children.

The department shows the way and administers the income support for early childhood education and child care, as well as for low-income families with children, in conjunction with the provinces and territories and other departments, along with experts from the various communities throughout the country. As well, it administers certain programs such as the national child benefit and the national child benefit supplement.

Yesterday we had the opportunity to hold discussions with our colleagues. One of the parties in this House said there was nothing in the budget for families. This is a pro-family initiative, with \$10 billion in funding annually, and it comes from the members on this side of the House. The department also administers the federal-provincial-territorial early childhood development agreement and the multilateral framework on early learning and child care.

Studies have demonstrated all the advantages of quality early childhood learning. Child care, nowadays, is a daily reality for most Canadian families, which is why they must have access to top-notch child care services with the potential of getting our children off to the best possible start in life.

[*English*]

The Government of Canada and Social Development Canada is therefore committed to working in partnership with provincial and territorial governments to build early learning and child care.

The essence of our system is collaboration with the provinces and territories. It is respecting the provinces that are willing to sign bilateral agreements at the moment, agreements that will allow access to the funds that we have already committed in order to respond to the needs of their citizens, the families who live in the riding and the children who need early learning and child care.

I want to stress something that came up in yesterday's debate. We are talking about early learning. We are not talking about babysitting, a term used by members of the opposition. We are talking about a national early learning and child care system, not just babysitting. That is a very important point to underline.

Last fall, governments agreed on core principles for early learning and child care that is of high quality, universally inclusive, accessible and developmental. All provinces were at the table and every one of them agreed on these core principles. As everyone knows, we have signed five agreements and we will continue to negotiate with all the provinces to come to some agreement. It is not a "one model fits all" deal. They each have different needs. They each have other pressures in terms of the families who live within their territories and it is up to them. We are providing the resources and the national policy framework.

The Government of Canada's commitment of \$5 billion over five years was confirmed in the recent budget. This includes \$4.8 billion for provinces and territories, \$100 million for first nations children on reserve and \$100 million for activities such as research that will support accountability.

We understand with our provincial and territorial partners that federal support will need to be ongoing beyond these initial years. In February the hon. Minister of Social Development met with the provincial and territorial social services ministers on a new policy framework for early learning and child care. These negotiations are ongoing.

• (1720)

[Translation]

Since April 29, we have reached five federal-provincial agreements in principle on the establishment of a quality early learning and child care program, with Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Nova Scotia.

[English]

Given these recent federal-provincial agreements in principle, we are confident that we will soon be able to finalize a national initiative in which the provinces and territories will have the flexibility to address their own particular needs and circumstances and to be accountable to their own citizens for their investments, a national initiative which will support the development of quality early learning and child care for young children and their families across Canada.

We know that people with disabilities have contributions to make to society and are looking for greater opportunities to make independent choices and to become more self-reliant.

[Translation]

This is why Social Development Canada is working to eliminate the obstacles that prevent people with disabilities from actively contributing at work, at school and within the community. SDC also notes that, while there is a greater awareness of issues relating to people with disabilities, the number of these people is on the increase, because the population is ageing.

Twenty years ago, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms allowed people with disabilities to make significant gains. We must now ensure that we have the appropriate tools and programs available, while also developing harmonious intergovernmental relations to continue to forge ahead.

The federal government recently earmarked additional money for the labour market development agreements, as they relate to people with disabilities. It will share the costs of these agreements with the provinces to support the employment programs designed for these people.

The Government of Canada also announced some major tax changes in its first budget, to make the tax system more fair and just in relation to people with disabilities and their families. These changes are in the order of \$107 million for 2005-06. They will amount to \$122 million by 2009-2010, and will take the form of credits to promote the integration and participation of people with disabilities.

[English]

Social Development Canada also looks at the lives of seniors. As the lead department responsible for seniors, Social Development

Government Orders

Canada wants to ensure that Canada's seniors live in dignity and live with purpose.

Twenty years from now, one in five Canadians will be a senior wanting to play an active role in Canadian society, participating in the community and benefiting from a retirement income system that sustains a good quality of life.

Social Development Canada ensures that those in need, as well as their survivors and children, get a basic income through public pensions, benefits, and supports. The recent budget announced increases of 7% to the guaranteed income supplement, the allowance and the allowance for the survivor that will put more money into the hands of thousands of seniors. New funding over the next five years will total \$2.7 billion.

I, as other members of Parliament, need to constantly assure ourselves that every senior who is eligible in terms of the supplement should have access to that supplement. I check this constantly whenever I meet with my seniors' clubs. This important point was raised by our colleague from the Bloc. This is our responsibility as well as the responsibility of Social Development Canada. We have to continue to make sure that no seniors go without access to this funding.

We also want to ensure that the skills of seniors are tapped, that their potential to give to their communities as they have always done is realized.

Last fall the department launched the new horizons for seniors program to support a range of community based projects to enable seniors to pursue active, useful lives. As it has proven in a short period of time to be very popular, we are gradually increasing its annual funding to \$25 million. I had the privilege of having the Minister of Social Development make that announcement in my riding.

There are two projects in my riding of Ahuntsic. One project is a very innovative and interesting one in which an interactive website has been set up between seniors and children who need some help with their school work. It goes all the way to Argentina, Brazil. That is the beauty of Internet. That is the beauty of the new age. Technology is a tool that can be used to reach children not only in Canada, but across borders, even internationally. The demand for that website is growing. Hopefully that organization, which happens to have its roots in my riding of Ahuntsic, will expand and become something other seniors can use across Canada.

• (1725)

[Translation]

The budget announcements also included the creation of a new national seniors secretariat within Social Development Canada.

[English]

I would like to mention that the initiative came from this side of the House, from my caucus colleagues. Two task forces made recommendations along the lines of what I said earlier and also in terms of the secretariat. I want to say thanks. This is another example of ideas on how we can help Canadians come straight from either a committee of the House or a task force set up by this side of the House.

Government Orders

[Translation]

The problems that seniors have to face are a concern for many federal departments and for all levels of government. The time has come to develop a coordinated approach for seniors, to ensure that all the efforts being made will help meet seniors' current and future needs. The national seniors secretariat must, in cooperation with its partners from the public and private sectors, ensure that this coordination and harmonization exercise does indeed take place.

Social Development Canada is also looking at the role of caregivers in our society, more specifically those families with young children that also look after aging spouses and grandparents. As mentioned in the Speech from the Throne, the government is determined to improve current tax assistance and to hold consultations across the country on other initiatives. For example, the Government of Canada is increasing its support to caregivers by doubling the amount that these people will now be allowed to deduct for medical and disability costs for a dependent parent, raising it to \$10,000.

[English]

Social Development Canada also looks at Canada's volunteer sector, which is 19 million strong. We support the capacity needs of the non-profit and volunteer organizations across Canada that make such a difference in the lives of Canadians and their communities.

Recognizing this immense contribution, we plan to further increase the sector's capacity, enabling it to meet the challenges of the future. Social Development Canada will be working in partnership with other federal departments to foster the country's social economy.

Before I continue, I want to pay homage to all those volunteers, especially those in the riding of Ahuntsic. I am sure all members of this House will agree that these volunteers are the unsung heroes of this country: people who give of their time and their talent only so other citizens can benefit by those talents and that time. I want to express my thanks to them. I think we should all be thanking them, as I do every year during National Volunteer Week when I hold a breakfast and thank every single one of those members of the riding of Ahuntsic who contribute to making my riding better because of their contribution.

I am running out of time, Madam Speaker, but I have so much to say on the social economy, although I did say something yesterday. Allow me to point out the beauty of the social economy, because there are unsung heroes out there who are doing wonderful things to take people out of dependency on the state and into the economy. Yesterday I had occasion during our four-hour debate to speak about the social economy and to congratulate all the stakeholders who have been working with me on the national round table.

I will wrap up by saying that I hope all hon. members will support this legislation. I hope they will take into account the fact that this came from a committee report. It was a recommendation from the previous Parliament and the committee on human resources and skills development, made in order to divide social development from human resources. We are always talking in this House about the fact that whenever there are reports and recommendations there is no

follow-up. Here is a perfect example: this initiative came from that committee and I believe we should all support it.

* * *

● (1730)

[Translation]

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AGENCY OF CANADA FOR THE REGIONS OF QUEBEC ACT

The House resumed from May 30 consideration of the motion that Bill C-9, an act to establish the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, be read the third time and passed; and of the motion that this question be now put.

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): It being 5.30 p.m., pursuant to order made on Tuesday, May 31, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded divisions.

Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

● (1750)

[English]

The Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Tuesday, May 31, the vote on the previous question in the name of the member for Honoré-Mercier relating to the motion at third reading stage of Bill C-9 is deemed carried on division.

(Motion agreed to)

The Speaker: Accordingly, the next question is on the motion at third reading stage of Bill C-9. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And more than five members having risen:

● (1800)

[Translation]

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(Division No. 92)

YEAS

Members

Abbott
Adams
Allison
Angus
Bagnell
Bakopanos

Ablonczy
Alcock
Ambrose
Augustine
Bains
Batters

Beaumier
 Bennett
 Bevilacqua
 Blondin-Andrew
 Bonin
 Boudria
 Breitzkreuz
 Broadbent
 Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
 Carr
 Carroll
 Catterall
 Chan
 Christopherson
 Comartin
 Cotler
 Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)
 Cummins
 D'Amours
 Day
 DeVillers
 Dhalla
 Dosanjh
 Drouin
 Duncan
 Emerson
 Eyking
 Fitzpatrick
 Folco
 Forseth
 Fry
 Gallaway
 Godfrey
 Goldring
 Goodyear
 Graham
 Guarnieri
 Harper
 Harrison
 Hiebert
 Hinton
 Hubbard
 Jean
 Johnston
 Kadis
 Karetak-Lindell
 Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
 Khan
 Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
 Lastewka
 Layton
 Lee
 Lukiwski
 Lunney
 MacKay (Central Nova)
 Macklin
 Maloney
 Marleau
 Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
 Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
 Matthews
 McDonough
 McGuire
 McLellan
 Menzies
 Miller
 Minna
 Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
 Moore (Fundy Royal)
 Murphy
 Neville
 O'Brien
 Obhrai
 Owen
 Pallister
 Patry
 Peterson
 Phinney
 Poilievre
 Prentice
 Proulx
 Ratansi
 Regan
 Reynolds

Bell
 Benoit
 Blaikie
 Boivin
 Boshcoff
 Bradshaw
 Brison
 Brown (Oakville)
 Byrne
 Carrie
 Casey
 Chamberlain
 Chong
 Coderre
 Comuzzi
 Crowder
 Cullen (Etobicoke North)
 Cuzner
 Davies
 Desjarlais
 Devolin
 Dion
 Doyle
 Dryden
 Easter
 Epp
 Finley
 Fletcher
 Fontana
 Frulla
 Gallant
 Godbout
 Godin
 Goodale
 Gouk
 Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells)
 Guergis
 Harris
 Hearn
 Hill
 Holland
 Jaffier
 Jennings
 Julian
 Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
 Karygiannis
 Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
 Komarnicki
 Lapierre (Outremont)
 Lauzon
 LeBlanc
 Longfield
 Lunn
 MacAulay
 MacKenzie
 Malhi
 Mark
 Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
 Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
 Masse
 McCallum
 McGuinty
 McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
 McTeague
 Merrifield
 Mills
 Mitchell
 Myers
 Nicholson
 O'Connor
 Oda
 Pacetti
 Parrish
 Penson
 Pettigrew
 Pickard (Chatham-Kent—Essex)
 Powers
 Preston
 Rajotte
 Redman
 Reid
 Richardson

Ritz
 Rodriguez
 Saada
 Savoy
 Scheer
 Schmidt (Kelowna—Lake Country)
 Sgro
 Silva
 Simms
 Smith (Pontiac)
 Solberg
 St. Amand
 Steckle
 Stoffer
 Szabo
 Temelkovski
 Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
 Tilson
 Tonks
 Trost
 Ur
 Valley
 Vellacott
 Wappel
 Wasylycia-Leis
 Wilfert
 Wrzesnewskyj

Supply

Robillard
 Rota
 Savage
 Scarpaleggia
 Schellenberger
 Scott
 Siksay
 Simard (Saint Boniface)
 Skelton
 Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul)
 Sorenson
 St. Denis
 Stinson
 Stronach
 Telegdi
 Thibault (West Nova)
 Thompson (Wild Rose)
 Toews
 Torsney
 Tweed
 Valeri
 Van Loan
 Volpe
 Warawa
 Watson
 Williams
 Yelich — 232

NAYS

Members

André
 Bellavance
 Bigras
 Boire
 Bouchard
 Brunelle
 Carrier
 Côté
 Demers
 Desrochers
 Faillie
 Gagnon (Saint-Maurice—Champlain)
 Gauthier
 Guimond
 Laframboise
 Lapierre (Lévis—Bellechasse)
 Lemay
 Lévesque
 Marceau
 Paquette
 Picard (Drummond)
 Roy
 Simard (Beauport—Limoilou)
 Vincent — 47

Bachand
 Bergeron
 Blais
 Bonsant
 Bourgeois
 Cardin
 Cleary
 Crête
 Deschamps
 Duceppe
 Gagnon (Québec)
 Gagnon (Jonquière—Alma)
 Guay
 Kotto
 Lalonde
 Lavallée
 Lessard
 Loubier
 Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
 Perron
 Poirier-Rivard
 Sauvageau
 St-Hilaire

PAIRED

Members

Barnes
 Boulianne
 Clavet
 Gaudet
 Paradis
 Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)
 Zed — 12

Bélangier
 Bulte
 Efford
 Ménard (Hochelaga)
 Plamondon

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.
 (Bill read the third time and passed)

* * *

[English]

SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—GOMERY COMMISSION

The House resumed from May 31 consideration of the motion.

Supply

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion of the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands relating to the business of supply.

• (1810)

[Translation]

(The House divided on the motion, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 93)

YEAS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Allison	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)
Batters	Benoit
Breitkreuz	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Carrie	Casey
Chong	Cummins
Day	Devolin
Doyle	Duncan
Epp	Finley
Fitzpatrick	Fletcher
Forseth	Gallant
Goldring	Goodyear
Gouk	Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells)
Guergis	Hangar
Harper	Harris
Harrison	Hearn
Hiebert	Hill
Hinton	Jaffer
Jean	Johnston
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lauzon
Lukiwski	Lunn
Lunney	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Mark
Menzies	Merrifield
Miller	Mills
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Nicholson	O'Connor
Obhrai	Oda
Pallister	Penson
Poillievre	Prentice
Preston	Rajotte
Reid	Reynolds
Richardson	Ritz
Scheer	Schellenberger
Schmidt (Kelowna—Lake Country)	Skelton
Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul)	Solberg
Sorenson	Stinson
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)	Thompson (Wild Rose)
Tilson	Toews
Trost	Tweed
Van Loan	Vellacott
Warawa	Watson
Williams	Yelich— 92

NAYS

Members

Adams	Alcock
Anderson (Victoria)	André
Angus	Augustine
Bachand	Bagnell
Bains	Bakopanos
Beaumier	Bell
Bellavance	Bennett
Bergeron	Bevilacqua
Bigras	Blaikie
Blais	Blondin-Andrew
Boire	Boivin
Bonin	Bonsant
Boshcoff	Bouchard
Boudria	Bourgeois

Bradshaw	Brison
Broadbent	Brown (Oakville)
Brunelle	Byrne
Cardin	Carr
Carrier	Carroll
Catterall	Chamberlain
Chan	Christopherson
Cleary	Coderre
Comartin	Comuzzi
Côté	Cotler
Crête	Crowder
Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)	Cullen (Etobicoke North)
Cuzner	D'Amours
Davies	Demers
Deschamps	Desjarlais
Desrochers	DeVillers
Dhalla	Dion
Dosanjh	Drouin
Dryden	Duceppe
Easter	Emerson
Eyking	Faille
Folco	Fontana
Frulla	Fry
Gagnon (Québec)	Gagnon (Saint-Maurice—Champlain)
Gagnon (Jonquière—Alma)	Galloway
Gauthier	Godbout
Godfrey	Godin
Goodale	Graham
Guarnieri	Guay
Guimond	Holland
Hubbard	Ianno
Jennings	Julian
Kadis	Karetak-Lindell
Karygiannis	Khan
Kotto	Laframboise
Lalonde	Lapierre (Outremont)
Lapierre (Lévis—Bellechasse)	Lastewka
Lavallée	Layton
LeBlanc	Lee
Lemay	Lessard
Lévesque	Longfield
Loubier	MacAulay
Macklin	Malhi
Maloney	Marceau
Marleau	Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	Martin (LaSalle—Énard)
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	Masse
Matthews	McCallum
McDonough	McGuinity
McGuire	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McLellan	McTeague
Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)	Minna
Mitchell	Murphy
Myers	Neville
O'Brien	Owen
Pacetti	Paquette
Parrish	Patry
Perron	Peterson
Pettigrew	Phinney
Picard (Drummond)	Pickard (Chatham-Kent—Essex)
Poirier-Rivard	Powers
Proulx	Ratansi
Redman	Regan
Robillard	Rodriguez
Rota	Roy
Saada	Sauvageau
Savage	Savoy
Scarpaleggia	Scott
Sgro	Siksay
Silva	Simard (Beauport—Limoulou)
Simard (Saint Boniface)	Simms
Smith (Pontiac)	St-Hilaire
St. Amand	St. Denis
Steckle	Stoffer
Stronach	Szabo
Telegdi	Temelkovski
Thibault (West Nova)	Tonks
Torsney	Ur
Valeri	Valley
Vincent	Volpe
Wappel	Wasylycia-Leis
Wilfert	Wrzesnewskyj— 192

PAIRED

Members

Barnes	Bélangier
Boulianne	Bulte
Clavet	Efford
Gaudet	Ménard (Hochelaga)
Paradis	Plamondon
Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)	
Zed— 12	

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

* * *

[English]

**DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES AND SKILLS
DEVELOPMENT ACT**

The House resumed from May 30 consideration of the motion that Bill C-23, an act to establish the Department of Human Resources and Skills Development and to amend and repeal certain related Acts, be read the third time and passed.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at third reading stage of Bill C-23.

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 now before the House with Liberal members voting in favour, except for those members who would like to be registered as having voted otherwise.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to proceed in this fashion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

• (1815)

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Mr. Speaker, the members of the Conservative Party will be voting yes on this motion.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Guimond: Mr. Speaker, members of the Bloc Québécois vote against this motion.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Speaker, members of the NDP vote against this motion.

[English]

Mrs. Carolyn Parrish: Mr. Speaker, I would like to vote yes.

Mr. Myron Thompson: Mr. Speaker, I would like to have my vote recorded as no.

[Translation]

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(Division No. 94)

YEAS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Adams	Alcock
Allison	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson (Victoria)
Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)	Augustine

Bagnell
Bakopanos
Beaumier
Bennett
Bevilacqua
Boivin
Boshcoff
Bradshaw
Brison
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Carr
Carroll
Catterall
Chan
Coderre
Cotler
Cummins
D'Amours
DeVillers
Dhalla
Dosanjh
Drouin
Duncan
Emerson
Eyking
Fitzpatrick
Folco
Forseth
Fry
Galloway
Godfrey
Goodale
Gouk
Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells)
Guergis
Harper
Harrison
Hiebert
Hinton
Hubbard
Jaffer
Jennings
Kadis
Karetak-Lindell
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Khan
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lastewka
LeBlanc
Longfield
Lunn
MacAulay
MacKenzie
Malhi
Mark
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Matthews
McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McTeague
Merrifield
Mills
Mitchell
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Myers
Nicholson
O'Connor
Oda
Pacetti
Parrish
Penson
Pettigrew
Pickard (Chatham-Kent—Essex)
Powers
Preston
Rajotte
Redman
Reid
Richardson
Robillard
Rota
Savage
Scarpaleggia
Schellenberger

Supply

Bains
Batters
Bell
Benoit
Blondin-Andrew
Bonin
Boudria
Breitkreuz
Brown (Oakville)
Byrne
Carrie
Casey
Chamberlain
Chong
Comuzzi
Cullen (Etobicoke North)
Cuzner
Day
Devolin
Dion
Doyle
Dryden
Easter
Epp
Finley
Fletcher
Fontana
Frulla
Gallant
Godbout
Goldring
Goodyear
Graham
Guarnieri
Hanger
Harris
Hearn
Hill
Holland
Ianno
Jean
Johnston
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Karygiannis
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Komarnicki
Lapierre (Outremont)
Lauzon
Lee
Lukiwski
Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)
Macklin
Maloney
Marleau
Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
McCallum
McGuire
McLellan
Menzies
Miller
Minna
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Murphy
Neville
O'Brien
Obhrai
Owen
Pallister
Patry
Peterson
Phinney
Poilievre
Prentice
Proulx
Ratansi
Regan
Reynolds
Ritz
Rodriguez
Saada
Savoy
Scheer
Schmidt (Kelowna—Lake Country)

Private Members' Business

Scott	Sgro
Silva	Simard (Saint Boniface)
Simms	Skelton
Smith (Pontiac)	Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul)
Solberg	Sorenson
St. Amand	St. Denis
Steckle	Stinson
Stronach	Szabo
Telegdi	Temelkovski
Thibault (West Nova)	Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Tilson	Toews
Tonks	Torsney
Trost	Tweed
Ur	Valeri
Valley	Van Loan
Véllacott	Volpe
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Cardin	Carrier
Christopherson	Cleary
Comartin	Côté
Crête	Crowder
Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)	Davies
Demers	Deschamps
Desjarlais	Desrochers
Duceppe	Faïlle
Gagnon (Québec)	Gagnon (Saint-Maurice—Champlain)
Gagnon (Jonquière—Alma)	Gauthier
Godin	Guay
Guimond	Julian
Kotto	Laframboise
Lalonde	Lapierre (Lévis—Bellechasse)
Lavallée	Layton
Lemay	Lessard
Lévesque	Loubier
Marceau	Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	Masse
McDonough	Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Paquette	Perron
Picard (Drummond)	Poirier-Rivard
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Clavet	Efford
Gaudet	Ménard (Hochelaga)
Paradis	Plamondon
Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)	
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The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Bill read the third time and passed)

[English]

It being 6:16 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[Translation]

TEXTILE AND CLOTHING INDUSTRIES

Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ) moved:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should establish, in compliance with international agreements, a policy of assistance to the textile and clothing industries in order to enable the industries to compete throughout the world, particularly by broadening the Technology Partnerships Canada program to include these two sectors.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to be able to put my motion before the House today for debate. Incidentally, it should be improved through an amendment that will be put forward shortly.

We know that, after the plants closed in Huntingdon in December, the federal government introduced—at the eleventh hour—an assistance plan for the textile industry. But this was an incomplete plan containing a few measures which have failed to produce the desired results, as evidenced by the 4,000 jobs lost in that industry in Canada since January 2005. Had the federal government taken appropriate action, we could go back on the offensive, go ahead and allow the textile and clothing industries to achieve interesting results. These two industries have an interesting future ahead of them, if they are looked after properly.

When I presented this motion this afternoon to a press conference, I was pleased to have the support of the likes of Ms. Aristéo, the director of the Québec council of the Unis-Unite Here union and vice-president of the FTQ, Atim Leon-Germain, a project officer at the Centre international de solidarité ouvrière, and, through a press release, Émilie Guindi, the director of the Quebec Clothing Contractors' Association, not to mention the representatives of the Canadian Textiles Institute who attended the conference. They did not necessarily support the motion in its entirety, but they wanted certain elements of the motion to be implemented as soon as possible.

The first thing that has to be pointed out is that Canada's textile and clothing industries are two industries that primarily need a reliable market. Their market completely changed after the international agreements ensuring some degree of protectionism within each country expired. Since January 2005, we have been operating in a context of almost complete international free trade. We must face the new reality: Chinese imports flooding our market, competition from other countries, and a closed American market for the past few years.

We must be able to implement measures that will allow us to improve market access. The first measure that our integrated plan proposes is to allow clothing made abroad with Canadian textiles to enter duty free. Unbelievable as it is, currently, when clothing is made abroad with Canadian textiles and re-enters the country, manufacturers must pay duties on this product. Yet we know that these products are made with Canadian textiles. This duty should no longer be applied. This would make it possible to create jobs in the textile industry without cutting jobs in the clothing industry, since the clothing is being made abroad. This is the first measure to revive the textile market.

Private Members' Business

Second, our plan proposes to impose stricter rules of origin on least developed countries. Let us remember that, a few years ago, we said we wanted to facilitate economic development in least developed countries by allowing them to enter our markets without paying duties. However, we opened the door very wide. Consequently, today, not only products from very poor countries that only do a small part of the work on the clothing imported to Canada, but also products from all the other countries where another part of the clothing was made are duty free. Today, it is often the case that clothing goes through three or four processes in as many different countries. The least economically developed countries are being used as a gateway to the Canadian market. In doing so, we create unfair competition for domestic products. This is the second way of opening the market.

As a third measure, as allowed under China's WTO accession protocol, we want to impose quotas on Chinese imports. This is not a protectionist measure in the long term, but a measure that is provided for in the agreement under which China acceded to the WTO. The Chinese were very firm in negotiating this agreement. They gained a number of advantages, but so did we, particularly with regard to access to their markets. Certain measures have been put in place to ensure protection in case of a large increase in Chinese imports. Since January, Chinese imports into Canada have increased by 29%.

• (1820)

It is a real phenomenon which must be contained. We must find a way of managing this situation to minimize its negative effects on our industry.

Indeed, of the 4,000 jobs that have disappeared since January, a certain number were lost because of these imports. The message for the coming months and the coming years is that there are currently no government regulations to minimize the impact of these Chinese imports. We need time to adjust. There is a means of doing that, which the Europeans and the Americans have considered using. In Canada, we have not heard about any plans to use it, at least not for now. Again, it is a way to secure a market.

The textile and clothing industries are not a thing of the past. They are today's and tomorrow's industries and deserve our help in securing markets.

The stakeholders in these industries have been asking us regularly for the opportunity to gain access to markets and saying that they will have the competitiveness, the originality and the creativity needed to penetrate these markets. That is the purpose behind the measures included in the comprehensive plan that I am submitting to the House of Commons for adoption.

Last December, the Liberal government announced three measures. However, they fall far short of systematically reviving the two sectors and, more importantly, assuring them the kind of future we want them to have.

Another measure was then proposed by the Centre international de solidarité ouvrière. It involves requiring detailed labelling that would allow consumers to identify the source of the product they are buying. Consumers end up voting when they made a purchase. They can decide to promote the economy of Quebec or Canada over that

of somewhere else. To do so, they need to know what they have before them and where and from what it was made.

When consumers buy wine, they know just about exactly where it comes from: from France, the region, the department and so on. This information is not available for clothing. I have even heard the following explanation. At the moment, the labelling on a suit such as I am wearing includes the words "Made in Canada" but, while the suit is made in Canada, there is no way of knowing where the material comes from. Was Canadian material used in fact? This type of information does not force consumers to buy that item of clothing, but it does indicate that by doing so they will be helping the Quebec or Canadian economy.

This, then, is one of the measures we consider important in the plan we are proposing.

The other type of measure is aimed at continued modernization of the textile and clothing sectors, which could stimulate research and development as well as design. I know there have been pilot projects in this sector, but they should be expanded and more help should be provided.

They say Montreal is a special place because both design and manufacture take place there. This advantage should be enhanced, move forward and provide additional benefits. The federal government has invested heavily in the new economy in the past 10 or 15 years. Now, with the new rules of international trade, traditional sectors deserve the same sort of assistance. We have seen it in the automobile and aeronautics industries in the Montreal area. We would like to see this kind of help in these sectors too.

We would also like to negotiate Canada's accession to the agreements reached between the United States and Central American and Caribbean countries. To me, that is perhaps the most important stipulation to expanding markets. From the time free trade was passed in 2000, there was amazing growth in the textile sector as a result of having access to the U.S. market.

Around 2000, the Americans passed laws and reached agreements with Caribbean countries. Now, American textiles, which are used to make clothing in the Caribbean, can re-enter the U.S. market, which is not the case if the product does not contain any American fabrics.

This immediately closed a major part of the market to Canada's textiles, which practically goes against the free trade agreement. This may not be done according to the letter, but in practice a market that was once open is now closed, to the benefit of businesses in the U.S. and the Caribbean.

We want the federal government to take action. Now there has been a meeting between the three leaders, the Prime Minister of Canada and the presidents of the United States and Mexico, there needs to be follow-up to ensure that all three countries have access to this type of program.

Private Members' Business

•(1825)

That way, if we manufacture Canadian textiles that might ultimately be turned into products or apparel in a Caribbean country, those products could come back onto the North American market through the United States, because the U.S. is one of the major markets.

Our plan must not forget the people who are and, unfortunately, who will be the victims of the current situation. This is particularly true in the apparel industry. Some apparel manufacturers are unaffected by this crisis because they are targeting very specific niche markets. This has proven somewhat successful. However, it always depends on two or three specific factors, such as the proximity to the American market and the ability to rapidly adapt to consumer demand. Not everyone is successful.

I can mention all the subcontractors. It has been a systematic occurrence for many years now, particularly in the denim industry. In my region of Saint-Pamphile, one company was the unfortunate victim. Industries Troie employed hard workers. It had a good management team and very professional seamstresses who subcontracted their services to manufacturers in greater Montreal.

However, when companies began to subcontract to China for substantially less, it was impossible to remain competitive. Now, there are 180 unemployed professional seamstresses, a number of whom are older. The federal government did nothing to ensure that they could obtain benefits under an older workers assistance program, which had existed up to 1995. This program gave older unemployed workers temporary benefits until they qualified for their old age pension in Quebec. We owe it to them.

They are entitled to benefits, because they worked for 15, 20, 25, 30 or 35 years. They paid taxes while working, often year-round, in jobs that paid little. These people were dedicated to their jobs. At the end, they are told that they will get 35, 40 or 45 weeks of EI benefits. After that, that is it. In my opinion, these unemployed workers deserve a decent income until they receive their old age pension.

The intent is not to create markets but to ensure that those working in this sector will be able to move on to other employment possibilities or to retirement without having to get through a period of time with an unacceptable drop in income.

We are talking about people who are often the second wage earner in the family. When jobs are lost—this example comes from my area—they are often the jobs of women earning \$8 or \$9 an hour. They get offered the same kind of job, but 50 km from home, for \$9 an hour. It is not even worth contemplating; it is not cost-effective. There must be measures in place to really help these people find another job. When this is not possible, there must be a program in place to help the oldest workers manage.

My hope for this debate I am opening up today is to ensure that the federal government will proceed with a number of additional measures that will truly allow the textile and clothing industries to adjust to the new market realities. If we manage to get the federal government to accept three, four or five of these measures, I think we will have accomplished something positive. We must not settle for the programs we have at present. The CANTex program is a bit like when someone feels a bit guilty and goes ahead to compensate

for some shortcomings, but it solves nothing. There is not enough money in the program. This is not the only kind of program needed. A system is needed that will open up the markets.

This is what I am proposing in my motion, a system that will also ensure those workers forced to leave the work force of decent treatment.

If this House cannot manage to reach agreement on the means to that end, I hope that this hour of debate and the next one will give us an opportunity to exchange views. As a result, we will end up with some action by the federal government that is far more aggressive and, when all is said and done, far more effective, or we can at least hope so.

•(1830)

Mr. Alain Boire (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my hon. colleague from Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup on the excellent work he has done on the textile issue, and on his motion.

I would like to know how this motion could have prevented 1,000 textile industry jobs from being lost in my riding of Beauharnois—Salaberry? I am referring to the 850 jobs at Cleyne & Tinker in Huntingdon and the 150 jobs at Huntingdon Mills and Ormspun.

I want to know how the government could have protected that textile market, since there is currently nothing on the clothes we buy showing where the fabric was made.

•(1835)

Mr. Paul Crête: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. I would like to acknowledge all the work he has done since these plant closures in Huntingdon were announced, sadly.

The answer to his question resides in the fact that, like every government around the world, the Canadian government knew that new market rules would apply starting January 2005. It had been known for years that we would have to change our way of doing things. The mistake was not to have prepared for it well enough and sent a clear message to the industry stakeholders that the Canadian government was there to ensure they would have access to this new market.

I have reviewed all the proceedings of the various committees dealing with international trade and industry. A departmental committee was also struck a few years ago. The government has hidden behind the fact that it was difficult to get the textile industry and the clothing industry to come to an agreement. So, it said that, once these stakeholders had agreed on something, it would implement it.

Private Members' Business

This took a long time and it was not easy. They are not the same industrial sectors and often they have different interests. Nonetheless, as a result, employers in Huntingdon got the message that nothing would change in Canada, that they had to make do with what they had and, at most, they could get a little bit of money through the CANTex or CATIP programs designed to update the companies. However, these were not significant amounts of money and there was no indication there would be a market.

In terms of NAFTA, if they had known five years ago, given the decision by the U.S. to recreate bilateral agreements with the Caribbean, that Canada would be making efforts and representations to the U.S. to be part of these things, the employers would have thought that the U.S. market might stay open for them. They could have invested and made sure their companies were as up-to-date as possible in order to try to keep their place on the market. Since there was no indication of the sort—there may have a decline in investment and interest—they decided to close their plants at a time when it made the most sense financially.

Unfortunately that is where things stand today. The other big problem is that no programs were set up for the older workers. People knew for many years that this threat was hanging over their heads, but the federal government did nothing about it. The first reaction occurred in December, the day after the plants closed in Huntingdon. It makes no sense.

They should have been proactive three or five years ago and set up programs. However, there was nothing. The day after the plants closed in Huntingdon, a few measures were announced here and there. So far, they have not produced the desired effect. We want the federal government to shift gears and take the offensive to help the clothing and textile industries take their rightful place.

Unfortunately this will not help the people of Huntingdon, but let us hope we can at least learn something from this sorry experience.

I invite my colleague to continue the work he is doing on behalf of the people coping with these terrible situations. I hope we will have the necessary sympathy and empathy here to ensure that there is in fact an assistance program for older workers, to help these people who, in 30 or 40 weeks, will run out of employment insurance benefits.

Hon. Eleni Bakopanos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Social Development (Social Economy), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak once again on behalf of the textile and apparel industries. In fact, other members and I have supported these industries over the years, and we continue to do so by taking part in the debate on Motion No. 164.

As the federal member for Ahuntsic, a riding where a great many apparel and textile manufacturers once—but not now, unfortunately—did business, I have very often had the opportunity to meet and talk with businesspeople in my riding to discuss and learn about the challenges and barriers these industries are facing.

Let me say that I do not support this list of amendments to the original motion. However, I would like to speak in favour of the original motion, which I support and which is aimed at establishing, in compliance with international agreements, a policy of assistance

to the textile and apparel industries in order to enable these industries to compete throughout the world.

As my colleagues know, Canadian textile and apparel industries are still major sources of economic activity revenue in Canada. Located mainly in major urban centres such as Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg and Vancouver, the clothing industry is a major employer for new Canadians.

My mother and my aunts came from Greece, my country of birth, and worked in these factories. The textile industry is a source of skilled jobs throughout Quebec, in Ontario and in the Maritimes.

Canada's apparel and textile industries have faced and are still facing a difficult global trade environment. It is an environment that has encouraged them to make a transition from national businesses and markets to global integrated businesses and markets.

● (1840)

[*English*]

Continually challenged by increasing competition from abroad, the Canadian apparel and textile industries have had to transform themselves over the past decade through focusing on higher value added activity, on innovation and attractive new products, and through identifying and winning niche markets for their products.

However, further change continues to be the order of the day. Apparel and textile markets continue to globalize. Domestic producers continue to face strong competition from low wage countries. The Canadian dollar has demonstrated renewed strength in the last two years. Most certainly, textile and apparel quotas have been eliminated consistent with Canada's World Trade Organization commitments.

Although many of these changes are not unique to the apparel and textile industries or even to the Canadian economy, they are nevertheless having an impact upon the environment in which these industries have and continue to operate. It is in the face of such challenges that the government has demonstrated its continued commitment to the long term viability of both the apparel and textile industries in Canada by working with them to confront these very challenges.

[*Translation*]

Even though this dialogue started some time ago, and not just because of calls by the opposition, I want to draw the attention of my colleagues to a particular case that illustrates this collaboration between government and industry representatives to overcome these challenges.

Private Members' Business

To assist these two industries with their preparations for the future, in 2002, the Government of Canada established a joint government-industry working group on textiles and apparel. The industries were represented by the Canadian Apparel Federation and the Canadian Textiles Institute, the two main marketing associations of these industries, as well as the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees, representing the employees. Officials from Industry Canada, Finance, International Trade, Statistics Canada, the former Human Resources Canada and the Canada Border Services Agency took part in these meetings.

This joint government-industry working group met a number of times in 2003, not in response to a crisis, because it already existed. During these meetings, representatives of these industries recommended that the government address the issues related to the long-term competitiveness of the apparel and textile industries.

[English]

In direct response to these recommendations the Government of Canada announced in February 2004 its commitment to continue to work toward an integrated North American market for Canadian apparel and textile products and to consider any proposals made jointly by the apparel and textile industries for new market development through an outward processing initiative. It would continue to protect against illegal transshipment of imported apparel and textile products and to use existing tools as appropriate to respond to industry complaints regarding injurious import surges.

It would work through the employment insurance program to continue to meet the needs of workers adjusting to changes in the industry and to ensure through ongoing support for human resource sector councils that employees obtain the skills they need to respond to the challenges of the rapidly changing labour market. It would identify and reduce tariffs on imported textile inputs used by the Canadian apparel industry so as to improve the industry's cost competitiveness, initially an approximate value of \$26.7 million to the apparel industry over the next three years and subsequently expanded by the Minister of Industry and the Minister of Finance on December 14, 2004 to an approximate value of \$75 million.

It would improve the competitiveness of Canadian textile companies through a new three year \$26.7 million textiles production efficiency initiative implemented in late 2004 and subsequently expanded on December 14, 2004 by \$50 million over five years. It would make the remaining funding from the company component of the Canadian apparel and textiles industries program or CATIP, as it is more widely known, more readily available to companies to undertake initiatives in advance of the removal of apparel and textile import quotas. Therefore, there was an initiative even before there was a problem. It would continue to work through the national initiatives component of the Canadian apparel and textile industries program to address the technology support, branding, trade development and e-commerce needs of the apparel and textile industries, all of which are in the amendments.

This may be old news to members on this side of the House, but it is worth noting in the context of this debate. It demonstrates that we have and are continuing to work with both industries to address these challenges in order to facilitate the continued viability of domestic firms.

• (1845)

[Translation]

In January 2003, we created the CATIP, a program with a three-year, \$33 million budget. Thanks to this program for Canadian apparel and textile manufacturers, funding was allocated to over 350 innovative strategic projects to enhance productivity, improve efficiency and identify new markets.

Furthermore, since 2002, \$10.9 million was provided to the Canada Border Services Agency to counter illegal transshipments of textile and apparel products by least developed countries.

Finally, we provided the initial funding to create the CANtex program, as I mentioned.

Just recently, we also announced duty reductions on textile inputs for further manufacturing in Canada; the allocation of an additional \$50 million for CANtex, the textiles production efficiency initiative, so that the textile industry can diversify, develop new product lines and identify new and expanding niche markets; and the five-year extension of the duty-remission orders, benefiting Canadian textile and apparel manufacturers.

I would like to come back to an initiative that affects the workers.

[English]

On May 2, 2005 I announced in Montreal on behalf of the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development funding of \$5.9 million under the sector council program for four projects by the Textiles Human Resources Council. These projects would help support the promotion of skills development within the textile sector, an aim to improve our country's economic growth and competitiveness in the sector.

This was followed again by another announcement last month by the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development of \$3 million for three projects aimed at improving our country's economic growth and competitiveness in the apparel sector.

In terms of the workers there is a pilot program for older workers. It is a program that I have been pushing on behalf of the government in order to expand and ensure that those workers who lose their employment once the industries are caught in this globalization will in fact have a new way to look for new jobs not within that sector but perhaps in another sector.

Private Members' Business

I want to remind hon. members that it is also up to the provincial government, since the Government of Quebec is responsible for training in Quebec. It has not put forward a program and we have had discussions with the sector councils to ensure that these workers are recycled perhaps. I know that in terms of the organization that works in my riding there is an 80% success rate in recycling some of those older workers.

Therefore, challenges remain. The government remains committed as it has in the past to help these industries meet these challenges. On this side of the House we are concerned about this industry. We are concerned about the workers in this industry, but we have not sat back and only criticized. We have in fact worked with the sector councils and the ministers involved, and we have brought forward measures in order to assist these industries.

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour tonight to put some remarks on the record. As I listened to the speeches and the rhetoric about the announcements as far back as 2002 in the textile industry, I was wondering what members opposite were thinking when they eliminated the tariffs on fibre and yarn imports. That amounted to \$15 million a year. They also eliminated the tariffs on imports of textile inputs used by the apparel industry, which was worth up to \$75 million a year effective January 1, 2005.

I remember back to January 2005. There were a lot of families that did not have Christmas because their industries were shut down or cut back in Manitoba. I remember mature workers not knowing where their next jobs would be coming from. I remember families under duress because of the uncertainty of their futures. This was a move by the present Liberal government that caused a great deal of harm to the textile industry throughout our nation.

The textile industry is a very formidable industry. There are 47,000 Canadians employed in textile jobs across Canada and 97,000 employed in the apparel industry. That is a lot of people. The announcement on January 1, 2005 effectively put people out of work. This hurt new immigrants in our country. A lot of these people were in the textile industry looking to obtain job experience and work their way up in that field in Canada. They wanted to present themselves with work experience so they could obtain other jobs.

What is happening now is like a band-aid on a bad situation. The present government must be very careful. More care and diligence should be put into trade agreements and negotiations. Unfortunately, many of the economic problems in this country now are caused by the problems Canadians are facing due to poor trade negotiations. BSE and softwood lumber are examples in addition to the textile and apparel industries.

I will read Motion No. 164 into the record again and then speak to some points surrounding it. It states:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should establish, in compliance with international agreements, a policy of assistance to the textile and clothing industries in order to enable the industries to compete throughout the world, particularly by broadening the Technology Partnerships Canada program to include these two sectors.

We on this side of the House in particular have some questions about adding the two sectors to the technology partnerships Canada program. We always support domestic industries.

It is a shame when opposition parties must ask the government to come up with policies that will support industry. Obviously, the kind of reckless decisions that were made to placate political agendas have really fallen hard on the textile and apparel industries in our nation.

By maintaining the tariffs on imported clothing and the types of textiles produced in Canada, we agree that there should be a two year maintenance and a slow phase-out of that. This would allow clothing made with Canadian textiles but manufactured abroad to be imported without custom duties. For example, if blue jeans are made by a foreign country, they can be free of any tariffs, but if those blue jeans are made by Canadian cloth, that is a different story. For instance, if something were made in Bangladesh and the company was developed by an entrepreneur in China who bought the company in Bangladesh and then imported it into Canada, it would be free from all the tariffs, according to the January 1 initiative by the Liberal government.

• (1850)

There needs to be a more careful assessment of the kinds of companies that are developed. Where are they developed? Why are they developed? Are they avoiding the tariffs to go through a lesser developed country? This is happening today here.

In fact, we suspect, through some evidence that has been gathered, that there are not enough checks and balances put in to find out exactly what is happening. If it is made in Bangladesh, it can come to Canada tariff free. But who has developed that company? Who has bought that company in Bangladesh? What country are they from to import things back into Canada? Those are the questions.

We should impose stricter rules of origin on less developed countries. Even though something comes from a less developed country, that does not necessarily mean that the owner of that company originated in the less developed country. There are not enough checks and balances in there to ensure that we know what is going on there. Canada must adhere to the agreements concluded with the United States, Central America and Caribbean nations. In other words, we must live up to our commitments.

In this day and age, there must be a more professional type of policy in the business world. We should be thinking about Canada first. We should be thinking about our Canadian companies first. The Liberal Party does not work with international organizations to reduce protectionist policies and to secure free trade agreements.

When I hear from members opposite about all these lists of different announcements that are supposed to impact in a very positive way, it behooves me to say that the big gap that really put a blow on the textile industry was made on January 1 when the government eliminated the tariffs on fibre and yarn imports and textile imports used by the apparel industry.

Private Members' Business

We are all for increasing occupational training transfers to Quebec and for giving training and training programs to workers. In the textile industry and the apparel industry, there are many mature workers. When I listen to the kind of band-aid approach that the present government has for dealing with the mature workforce in the industry, I just have to shake my head.

We need to create an adjustment program that is worthwhile for older workers. Older workers, or what I call mature workers, in the industry are people who are caught. They are caught because they have committed themselves to working in the textile and apparel industry as a career and then when they get up to be 40, 45, 50, all of a sudden, with their jobs being negated, they do not have a future.

The Liberals should ensure that Canadian industries are secure and Canadian workers are taken care of. With the kind of approach that is happening at this time, it behooves us to take a look at the amendment and work quickly to uphold this industry.

• (1855)

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to have the unanimous consent of the House to split my time with the member for Windsor West.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Winnipeg Centre has asked for unanimous consent to split his time with the member for Windsor West. Is there consent?

An hon. member: No.

Mr. Pat Martin: Mr. Speaker, I thought we had the unanimous consent of the parties because we checked ahead of time.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I wonder if the Chair could check again to see if we can get unanimous consent to allow the NDP member to split his time.

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre have the unanimous consent of the House to divide his time with the member for Windsor West?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

• (1900)

Mr. Pat Martin: Mr. Speaker, I thank all my colleagues for the generosity of spirit that they have demonstrated today. As a personal favour from my colleague from Windsor West, I asked if I could share time with him today. The subject of the debate is an issue that is very important to me and to my riding.

I had 43 garment manufacturers in my riding, but now I have 42. Just a few weeks ago yet one more garment manufacturer succumbed to the pressures of that industry and went out of business. Therefore, we suffered another bankruptcy in this industry sector.

The reason I welcome the opportunity to debate the issue of the health and well-being of the garment and textile industry is that the government's treatment of this industry to date is difficult to understand. It has ranged from absolute neglect for many decades to meddling and unhelpful interference.

What is really frustrating is we have a long established industry that has been healthy from one end of the country to the other, from Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, Vancouver, southern Ontario for textiles. Somehow it just has not captured the imagination of the government or previous governments. It has always been allowed to bumble along and flounder without any help or support.

When the government does wake up and pay attention to the industry, it does things that cause more harm than good, such as this least developed nations policy that the former prime minister virtually arbitrarily pulled out of the air. This was a bad idea because least developed nations would get a duty remission or a relief on import tariffs. All that did was the multinational manufacturers shifted their work to least developed nations to exploit the cheap labour and then those goods would come into Canada without any duty or import tariff. This was a devastating move. As I say, sometimes we are almost better off with no intervention than that kind of meddling which did more harm than good.

The industry in my riding of Winnipeg Centre is in crisis. It urgently needs the intervention of the government and it needs the ear of the government. Somebody has to convince the government that this is an industry worth saving, that it is an industry of value. Maybe it is not one of the sexy, high tech industry sectors that the government seems willing to throw tons of money toward, but it is just as important to keep the jobs we have as it is to spend money to try to attract new jobs. What good does it do Canada as a whole to spend a fortune trying to attract new jobs and new industries to Canada if we are letting the old established industries slip away from us at a rate faster than the new ones are growing? That is what is happening in this important industry sector.

I only have a few minutes but I will point out how critically important these jobs are to my riding in Winnipeg Centre. In many ways they are gateway jobs. These are the first jobs many new Canadians get when they land in Canada, and they are not poorly paying jobs. They are unionized jobs. I have been to many of the garment manufacturers in my riding such as Western Glove, et cetera. They have good day care centres right in the plant and they are well lit, bright, clean and healthy working environments. People in Winnipeg at least can raise a family or buy a house with the wages they earn from these jobs. Why would we willingly stand by and watch these jobs slip away?

I will comment on one last thing. We have to be quicker to react when an industry like this tells us it is crisis. For some inexplicable reason, the Minister of Finance sat on the duty remission orders that were on his desk for nine months until the very brink of disaster. They were set to expire December 31, 2004, and right into the middle of that month, we were in the House of Commons demanding, begging and pleading with him to reapply these duty remission orders so the industry at least would have a fighting chance.

I see the value of the House of Commons being seized of the issue of protecting this important industry. We should do it for the whole country and we should pay attention to the benefits that a vibrant garment industry brings to Canada.

Private Members' Business

•(1905)

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleagues for allowing us to split our time on this very important issue. The member for Winnipeg Centre has been working on this issue for a long time. It is important to have the personal touch related to ones constituency involved in this.

As the industry critic for the New Democratic Party, I would like to give credit to the Bloc for bringing the motion forward. Sectorial strategies are very important. There are approximately 93,000 workers employed in this industry which stretches from coast to coast to coast. It is one that is important to recognize in terms of a manufacturing base.

There has been a lot of preoccupation in recent years with the idea of moving to higher technology. Technology is seen as the panacea to moving a business forward. The automotive base is located in my constituency of Windsor West, and it is one of the most important industries in Canada in terms of its history and its future.

However, we need our manufacturing industry to survive for a number of reasons. It provides good employment and opportunities. It also leads to other industries and development, including the high tech industry. It feeds into a whole different area of development, whether through design, or newer technology and computerization or training opportunities so people can move into further employment. That is why sectorial strategies are important. In my opinion the government has missed this.

I want to mention some testimony that was provided in 2003 at finance committee by the president of Western Glove Works. In 2003 the company employed just under 1,300 Canadians. A year later that number was down to 587. Those people had good jobs. They made a decent wage and had a decent standard of living. Those jobs are gone now. We cannot get them back.

Some countries we compete against use all kinds of advantages, whether it be tariffs, or environmental or working conditions that are unfair to our Canadian workers. Our workers are proficient. They are well trained, but unfortunately they have to compete in an unfair market.

I was recently in Washington doing some parliamentary work with other members of Parliament. I was sitting in the office of a Republican member from California who told me that he regretted voting in favour of letting China into the WTO because of fair trade. Being a New Democrat that comment nearly floored me. He asked me how workers in the manufacturing industry in California, Michigan, Ohio were expected to compete when post-end production in some of these other countries was deplorable?

When I say deplorable, I am talking about some of the environmental and waste management subsidies not used because of the lack of scrutiny and regulations conducive to a better environment. How do we compete with those factors?

When the government enters into trade negotiations, it has a responsibility to ensure they are fair. The United States said China "lacked legal grounding" in some of the things it was doing. The States has been pressing this issue as well.

The government does not have a good comprehensive plan. I want to point out one thing in particular. The government has provided \$50 million in additional funding to encourage restructuring of the textile industry, which is the 10th largest manufacturing industry in Canada. That is peanuts. When that \$50 million is broken down, of the 3,900 businesses, it amounts to \$13,000 per establishment. It could hire a part time janitor to help with the restructuring.

There has to be a better comprehensive plan and an ongoing commitment from the government for a comprehensive strategy. The motion is a step in the right direction.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to take part in this debate on Motion M-164, which seeks to require the federal government to establish a true plan to support the textile and clothing industries, which are currently going through a very serious crisis. This situation was certainly predictable. However, because the government did not assume its responsibilities in this respect over the past decade, it is only right that additional efforts now be made to help companies and workers in the textile and clothing sectors. Indeed, we must allow them to adjust or change, while taking into consideration the new reality. I am referring more specifically to the lifting of quotas, on January 1—something we knew since 1995 would take place—and, of course, the emergence of China which, as we know, has experienced tremendous growth in recent years. For example, last year, that growth exceeded 9%.

This is why I am very pleased that the hon. member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup proposed this motion asking for an integrated plan. This is extremely important. Such a plan cannot include only a form of assistance to restructure the industry through more productive technology and better occupational training. Of course, such initiatives are necessary, but there must also be measures to allow this transition. The federal government has many options available. However, it has not even announced its intentions yet. It has not made any move.

I should point out that the United States and the European Community announced that they would begin looking at the possibility of initiating the process that would allow them to use safeguards. This is provided under the WTO agreement, more specifically the agreement on textile and clothing. This was also negotiated specifically with China, when it joined the WTO, in 2001. At the time, I put a question to the Minister of International Trade. I wanted to know if, should an uncontrolled invasion of Chinese or other imports in this sector—or, for that matter, in other sectors—occur, the federal Liberal government, the Government of Canada, would use the means available under international rules.

Private Members' Business

The only response I got from the Minister of International Trade was that it had gone up only 6% in two months. That was two months ago. Now it has gone up considerably in certain very specific sectors. Today we had an opportunity to meet with representatives of the unions and the industry, and were told that there had been some quite major increases in Chinese imports, in particular men's trousers, and undergarments and brassieres, where they exceeded 100%. These figures are for the first four months of 2005.

I would remind hon. members that, according to the clothing and textile sector human resources committee, there have been 4,000 jobs lost since January 1. That is huge. In comparison, the U.S. figure of 12,000 lost jobs is nothing compared to the 4,000 in Canada, given the American market. In the U.S., their government has initiated a process whereby there is a possibility of implementing some potential protective measures.

The European Union is looking at the situation. Some EU member states and some businesses are concerned. The administration of the EU has announced that they have set in motion a process that might lead to protective measures. What about Canada? No word of anything.

Fortunately certain members, such as the hon. member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, want more than just speeches. And goodness knows we have had plenty of those. I have heard plenty of talk from the Liberals, and now we need some very concrete action.

What the hon. member is proposing is a plan that would enable us to meet future challenges. We do not want to have protective measures for our markets indefinitely. I think everyone must agree on that. As we know, these are measures that can be used for three years, so we would give ourselves three years to achieve a proper transition to areas requiring more leading edge technology, while not abandoning a broad range of apparel product areas in which we have performed very well.

• (1910)

I would point out that, when we signed the free trade agreement with the United States and the North American free trade agreement, which Mexico signed, alarmists warned of catastrophes in the textile and clothing sectors. These industries did very well, on the contrary, and we were able to help them face new situations.

There is nothing at the moment, apart from a plan cobbled together after the closure of the six companies in Huntingdon. It was high time to return to the House to propose a plan to supplement the inadequate one cobbled together, which the government presented in December.

After discussion with my colleague for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, we would like to push our proposals a little further. With his consent, and seconded by my colleague from Richmond—Arthabaska, I would like to move the following amendment:

That Motion M-164 be amended by inserting the following after the words "in particular"

by maintaining the tariffs on imported clothing and the types of textiles produced in Canada;

by establishing, as required, quotas on Chinese imports under the protocol on China's accession to the WTO;

by allowing clothing made with Canadian textiles but manufactured abroad to be imported without customs duties;

by imposing stricter rules of origin on less developed countries;

by negotiating Canada's adherence to the agreements concluded between the United States and Central American and Caribbean countries;

by adopting a local purchase policy, where allowed under international agreements;

by asking certain countries to increase their minimum labour standards and environmental standards in order to prevent offshoring to locations with lower costs;

by requiring detailed labels to allow consumers to identify the source of the products they purchase;

by increasing occupational training transfers to Quebec;

by creating an adjustment program for older workers;

by establishing a modernization assistance program for the clothing and textile sectors that would stimulate research and development as well as creation.

I therefore move this amendment, which, in my opinion, expresses in even more detail my colleague's desire for a real assistance plan and an integrated plan of support for the industry and the people working in it today.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to know whether I have any time left. I really wanted to make sure I could introduce my amendment.

• (1915)

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: Normally a speech finishes once a member moves an amendment such as that, unless there are some short concluding remarks.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paquette: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated earlier, this amendment gives effect to my hon. colleague's desire to have an integrated plan. Notice as well that these proposals include a number of provisions to help the industry protect itself against certain threats that have already been identified in the past by the industry and the unions, especially at the Standing Committee on Finance.

I hope that all parties will support both the amendment and the main motion.

The Deputy Speaker: The debate is now on the amendment. The hon. member for Laval—Les Îles.

Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to reply to Motion M-164. While I do not support the list of amendments put forward by my hon. colleague from Joliette, this long list of amendments added to the main motion, I would like to speak to the main motion, which I support.

The government recognizes the pressure the Canadian textile and apparel industries are under to become increasingly competitive internationally. The difficulties these industries are currently facing are especially striking, as these are industries that had been sheltered from global competition since the 1950s.

Naturally, Canada is not the only country affected. Many developed countries have also protected their textile and apparel industries. But the gradual shift from a highly protectionist approach to greater trade liberalization marks an important milestone for businesses in the textile and apparel industries in Canada and in other developed countries.

Take for example the import quotas that were imposed during more than 20 years under the Multifiber Arrangement, whereby Canada and other developed countries could impose quotas on imports from countries where wages were low.

As we have heard, the replacement, in 1995, in WTO countries, of the Multifiber Arrangement with the Agreement on Textiles and Apparel—

● (1920)

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: Order. 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.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[English]

CANADA-U.S. BORDER

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak once again, as I often have in the House of Commons, on the Windsor—Detroit border. This relates to a question which I asked recently. The Prime Minister, who claims he is from Windsor, refuses to get up in the House of Commons and actually answer questions about the border. It is something which I think should be done. The Minister of Transport answered the question. I will read the question I asked:

Mr. Speaker, many of those jobs are at risk because of Liberal inaction at the Windsor-Detroit border. In fact, the Prime Minister promised in the last election that he would support a made in Windsor solution. He also promised cold hard cash. I would like to know from the finance minister how much of this weekend's announcement is cold hard cash to fix the Windsor border and protect Ontario's economy?

Previously, I have asked questions of the Prime Minister. I asked the Prime Minister a question this week and he refused to answer. The answer from the Minister of Transport was interesting. He said:

I want to tell the hon. member that the cash is there for the projects that have been agreed upon with the province of Ontario by the Government of Canada. We hope to take the city onside. The cash is there and we are ready to spend it anytime.

The fact is that the federal government came to Windsor with the province of Ontario for a photo opportunity. The province decided to put money on the table but the federal government did not. That is counter to everything the Prime Minister has said.

I want to review a few of those remarks. It is important to note the history and the verbal commitment by the Prime Minister which has not translated into actual funds to solve the problems at the most

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important border crossing in North America. It is a very important border crossing for the community as well.

In January 2004 the Prime Minister promised “cold hard cash” for the people of Windsor when they presented a plan. That was done through city council and the Schwartz report. It was presented to the federal government. The government has yet to issue a statement on its support of that plan.

The Prime Minister said, “The thing is that there is no doubt that the crossing here is the single most important crossing in Canada. And it is a priority”. Here is another quote:

—we are not going to do this unless it really conforms to what the people of the city want....So, now we've done this, now it's a question of determining what exactly, how the city wants to see us do it. This is not going to be imposed. That is an absolute guarantee. This is not going to be imposed.

That was the response the city received after sitting down and developing a plan and presenting it to the federal government. The Prime Minister has not followed through on it. That is discouraging because he promised to listen to the city's residents. They delivered a report and there has been no action of any significant magnitude.

I can point to specific things that are not even controversial. One is the Detroit-Windsor truck ferry. The government makes it pay for customs officials and the location of them, whereas the Ambassador Bridge and the tunnel do not have to pay. The ferry actually is a border solution that the residents and the people of the community support. It takes international truck traffic off our roads and is actually one of the safest crossings in the nation. It cannot advance because it faces unfair business practices because of the federal government.

All the government did in its recent announcement was propose to study the problem. The problem is that they have to pay for things that others do not have to pay for, so how can they compete? This is a good example of the bad behaviour that has been happening at our border.

The Prime Minister also said:

I think that whatever we can do to keep that free flow open between Windsor and Detroit, we've got to do.

The first thing is to start listening to the people in the area. We know how to get trucks off our streets and the economy running.

● (1925)

Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak about the very important initiatives for the Windsor-Detroit gateway. On April 21, 2005, the Government of Canada announced \$129 million in projects as part of phase 2 of the strategy called Let's Get Windsor-Essex Moving. This is a further step toward improving the flow of traffic in the city of Windsor and in Essex county.

A total of \$300 million has been allocated to this strategy by the governments of Canada and Ontario. The government has already invested more than \$82 million in phase 1 projects that will be completed over the next three years. All Canadians have a stake in the efficiency of this gateway, which handles goods worth \$140 billion every year.

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We live and work in a just in time economy. Jobs and growth depend on the efficiency of transportation corridors. Companies make their investment decisions and choose their suppliers based on factors such as the reliability of delivery times.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in Windsor. In fact, Windsor is the single most important gateway in Canada. It accounts for over 25% of Canada-U.S. trade by truck. This corridor is vital to the jobs of millions of people throughout Ontario, Quebec and the Maritimes.

The Windsor-Detroit gateway is a key priority for the Government of Canada, of which the Let's Get Windsor-Essex Moving strategy is a major component. Our American partners also understand the importance of this gateway.

Last February, the Minister of Transport met with the U.S. transportation secretary, Norman Mineta, to discuss ways to improve the security and the efficiency of gateways, including the need for additional infrastructure to improve traffic flows, new border capacity for the long term and expansion of border processing initiatives to help expedite cross-border traffic. I can assure the House that the U.S. administration also sees Windsor-Detroit as a major priority.

I am very proud of the efforts that the governments of Canada and the United States, as well as Michigan and Ontario, are making on the binational partnership. We are working together on long term solutions that will serve the Windsor-Detroit gateway for the next 30 years.

The binational partnership recently initiated an environmental assessment process that will determine the location for new crossing capacity across the Detroit River. This is a critical part of our planning to deliver additional capacity by 2013.

The binational partnership is working systematically and thoroughly. The partnership is taking every step to make the right decisions and the right choices for the long term.

We also recognize that we need to do more to improve the situation in the short term and the medium term. That is why the government announced on April 21 projects worth \$129 million to implement phase 2 of the Let's Get Windsor-Essex Moving strategy.

The projects include environmental assessments and detailed design and feasibility studies for a wide range of initiatives, as well as construction of several road projects and the implementation of intelligent transportation systems. This involves several modes of transportation: trucking, rail and ferry transportation.

These projects build on the recommendations made in the Schwartz report, which provided the government with an excellent foundation for moving ahead. These short term and medium term projects fit well with the long term solutions that will be provided by the partnership. The government will bring the information provided by the Schwartz report into the work of the binational partnership.

The government is looking forward to working with all our partners to move these projects forward. I am sure that the city of Windsor and Essex county will continue to hear from the government over the coming months as the long term planning efforts are advanced through the binational partnership.

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, I have heard a lot in the House, but I just cannot believe that this is the best government response that can be canned and delivered.

Here is what happened. We had an understanding on phase 1. The province was on side, the federal government apparently was on side and the city was on side to move \$82 million worth of projects along. Let me tell members right now that some of the funding has not even been released by this government for those projects. It will not release the funding for them and they are consensus items.

Those government members get up and talk about how much money is coming. I think every community across this country can probably appreciate the fact that Liberals go into their ridings and announce money, but the communities never actually see it delivered. This is a common experience.

Why was it that the ministers came to our community with the province of Ontario people and made announcements? The city was not on side. They had to have the photo opportunity instead of sitting at the table and working on a solution together. They should be embarrassed at doing this again.

• (1930)

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Mr. Speaker, that is the rhetoric we get from the NDP. It is unfortunate that members of the NDP never listen carefully. Let me again wrap up what we are doing.

We have a strategy in place called Let's Get Windsor-Essex Moving. It was announced last March. Over \$600 million have been committed to the border infrastructure fund. We are committed to be there for the people of Windsor and Canada to ensure that 25% of transportation and trucks will go along the Windsor-Detroit corridor. It is just in time to provide jobs and make sure that the Canadian people, especially in the area my hon. colleague represents, have work for the long run.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Stockwell Day (Okanagan—Coquihalla, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I had the opportunity to address a similar question which, just to remind my colleagues, goes back to the incident related to Zahra Kazemi, the Canadian photojournalist. A little over two years ago she was arrested in Iran for the grave crime of taking a picture outside of a prison. A couple of days after her arrest it was announced that in fact she had died.

The muted requests for information from the government at that point received a response that first said she may have had a stroke. Yes, if someone is hit in the head enough times that person will have more than a stroke. The person will expire. When the excuse of her having a stroke sounded very bizarre and silly, it was then suggested that during the interrogation she must have fallen and maybe hit her head against a table. The fact was that she had been killed during the interrogation process.

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At that time the position of the official opposition was that the government had to be very vigorous and robust and had to take significant action to get justice, not just for Ms. Kazemi but for her son, her family, all Canadians and all human beings when one thinks about it. The government was very muted. In situations like this, when dealing with repressive regimes the government has a philosophy of always taking the route of the appeaser.

History shows that tyrants and dictators cannot be appeased. They interpret that as a sign of weakness and do not respect what is being done.

This dragged on. There were responses here and there from the government but nothing that was robust and vigorous. We suggested, first, that the ambassador be brought home, as any self-respecting country would do; and second, that the United Nations put together a coalition of other countries in terms of dealing with this and demand a clear judicial process with a Canadian presence in observer status. These are minimum requirements. None of that was done. The question was simply, "Could you please tell us what happened? Isn't this awful", and huffing and puffing.

Just last November there was a secret meeting between Canadian officials and the surgeon who did the autopsy of Ms. Kazemi. What was revealed in November only to government officials and not to the public was that Ms. Kazemi had been wrongly arrested, which of course we know, tortured, raped and murdered.

What was the government's response in the month of November? Our ambassador, who had only been brought home temporarily, not pulled out of Iran as a sign that all countries understood that this was a serious matter, our ambassador at that point was sent back to Iran to "normalize relations" on something as abnormal as this.

I asked the Prime Minister why that action was taken, why it was so muted and why it was so contradictory to what should have been done, which was to stand up for someone's right to live. This was broached. This was taken away and she was robbed. The Prime Minister said that it was done to protect the doctor. The doctor who did the autopsy was already in safe asylum. That was not a response. There was no reason that this process happened in this muted, weak, appeasing way and we demand to know why the ambassador was sent back.

• (1935)

Hon. Dan McTeague (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Okanagan—Coquihalla for raising this issue for the second consecutive evening.

As I stated yesterday in this House, the government is determined to pursue justice for the Kazemi family without qualification.

The announcement made by Minister of Foreign Affairs on May 17, which runs contrary to his comments of appeasement, is the latest of many extraordinary measures that have been taken over the past two years by our government and we will continue to press for results in this case.

We have clearly informed the Iranian government of our indignation and displeasure on the case and we will continue to

press as well for concrete changes to be made to Iran's broader human rights performance.

Our government has asked, and will continue to ask, for the return of Ms. Kazemi's body to Canada for an independent three-person forensic investigation in Ms. Kazemi's death. Ultimately, a credible investigation is the only way the disturbing questions about this case can be answered.

We have also pursued the Kazemi case in our dialogue with other governments, the European Union and the United Nations bodies, to obtain their support to have this case seen as an example of the serious human rights violation that persists in Iran.

We appreciate the active assistance that they have offered us and will continue to liaise with our like-minded partners to discuss developments and, of course, strategies.

We have also remained in continual telephone contact with Ms. Kazemi's son, Stephan Hachemi, to share details of developments. Canadian government lawyers have also engaged in a constructive, cordial and common-cause effort with Mr. Hachemi's lawyers to look at every single legal avenue available. These discussions are being pursued on an intensified basis.

We have met on numerous occasions with the lawyer for the Kazemi family in Tehran, Nobel Laureate Shirin Ebadi, to discuss available avenues under Iranian law. We are continuing our dialogue with this exemplary human rights defender.

When we were initially approached, as the hon. member suggested, with word of Dr. Aazam's account, in November 2004, we were of course concerned for his safety and his security, as was the member.

We have assisted in bringing him here to Canada as a refugee and have respected his need for confidentiality and safe haven, as well as those who may have also been witness to this. Information provided by Dr. Aazam will contribute to the ongoing efforts to achieve justice for Ms. Kazemi and her family. I know the hon. member understands this.

However, it is critical that we understand, and the records show this very clearly, that we have twice withdrawn our ambassador to Iran as a strong diplomatic signal of protest. We have made this point, to use the hon. member's words, vigorously and robustly. Keeping our ambassador in Canada would have done nothing to strengthen this message, and not at a time when Iran is one of the chief concerns of the international community.

Our ambassador was asked to return because we have serious concerns that must be given necessary attention.

Our ambassador is in Tehran to deal with the Iranian authorities so justice can be done in the Kazemi case, as I suggested yesterday. The ambassador is also there to apprise us of the possible action within the Iranian government system itself. Unfortunately, the Kazemi case is not unique. It is a symptom of the numerous human rights violations committed in Iran on a daily basis.

Whether in Iran or elsewhere, issues involving individual freedoms, respect for human rights and transparency of the society are of concern to all Canadians, and rightly so.

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The Government of Canada believes it is more important now than ever to have an ambassador present in Tehran and to focus our efforts on the priorities to which Canadians attach a significant and great importance.

For all these reasons, we need our ambassador in Iran. We need someone there who has status to give him the power to intervene at the highest levels of government and we need someone who can ensure that Canada's point of view is heard loud and clear. That is why our ambassador is in Tehran.

Mr. Stockwell Day: Mr. Speaker, let me just quote the response from the minister when I asked him the question about why we would send our ambassador back. This is an important point.

We pressured the government for a long time to bring the ambassador home so the whole world would know the level of concern we had. It is very serious when a country brings its ambassador home. We did not say to close down the embassy. We still have consular staff there who can deal with Canadians who might be in trouble. Heaven help them if they get in trouble in Iran after the example this government has shown in terms of not standing up for a Canadian citizen.

There was a point when the government actually brought the ambassador home temporarily before we ever found out the awful truth. It was kind of like a little tap on the Iranian wrist. Then when we found out the details that she was wrongly arrested, tortured, raped, murdered, we sent the ambassador back to normalize relations.

There was no sense in doing that. Why did the government fail all Canadians this way?

● (1940)

Hon. Dan McTeague: Mr. Speaker, I want to make it perfectly clear to the hon. member that in this kind of situation where we have a Canadian who has been brutally murdered, where we have sent as many signals as we can internationally and diplomatically, the last thing we want to do is to remove the very person who will argue on her behalf right in Tehran. That is exactly what we are doing.

I know he shares the same passion for this case as I do, but I also know the hon. member is well aware of the fact that there are other Canadians who are there right now whose lives could also be affected. Also there are other people who witnessed that very brutal murder. They were there as attending physicians. We must try to provide some protection for which the Iranian government has already responded.

We must speak for Ms. Kazemi's death, if her death means anything, and that means keeping the ambassador there.

The Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24 (1).

(The House adjourned at 7:41 p.m.)

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