



CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Tuesday, April 11, 2006**

—  
**Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, April 11, 2006

The House met at 10 a.m.

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*Prayers*

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1000)

[*English*]

### INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

**The Speaker:** I have the honour to lay upon the table the report on the Canadian parliamentary delegation to the Republic of Portugal from November 5-9, 2005.

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### GOVERNOR GENERAL'S SPECIAL WARRANTS

**Hon. John Baird (President of the Treasury Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as required by section 33 of the Financial Administration Act and as part of our commitment toward accountability and openness, I am honoured to table, in both official languages, the statement on the use of Governor General's special warrants.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

### PUBLIC SERVICE INTEGRITY OFFICER

**Hon. Michael Chong (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister for Sport, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the 2004-05 annual report of the public service integrity officer.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

### ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT

**Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I am pleased to table, in both official languages, the following two documents: first, a discussion paper entitled, "Strengthening the Access to Information Act: A Discussion of Ideas Intrinsic to the Reform of the Access to Information Act"; and, second, the proposals of the Information Commissioner to amend the Access to Information Act.

## REPORT OF NISGA'A FINAL AGREEMENT

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, under provisions of Standing Order 32, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, copies of the 2003-04 annual report of the Nisga'a final agreement.

\* \* \*

● (1005)

## REPORT OF YUKON LAND CLAIMS

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, under provisions of Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table in both official languages, copies of the 2003-04 annual report of the Yukon land claims and self-government agreements.

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## REPORT OF THE SAHTU, DENE AND MÉTIS COMPREHENSIVE LAND CLAIM AGREEMENT

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I also have both copies of the 2003-04 annual report of the implementation committee on the Sahtu, Dene and Métis comprehensive land claim agreement.

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## FEDERAL ACCOUNTABILITY ACT

**Hon. John Baird (President of the Treasury Board, CPC)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-2, An Act providing for conflict of interest rules, restrictions on election financing and measures respecting administrative transparency, oversight and accountability.  
(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

\* \* \*

## FEDERAL ACCOUNTABILITY ACT

**Hon. John Baird (President of the Treasury Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour, on behalf of this Prime Minister and this team, to table unprecedented legislation, the toughest of its kind in history, to help clean up government and restore the public trust.

*The Address*

**Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to say a couple of words on behalf of the NDP caucus.

We are very pleased to hear the confidence the President of the Treasury Board has that the bill he is tabling today will change the culture in Ottawa. We would welcome that. We would be the first to compliment the government if it were to end the corruption that we suffered through for many years under the Liberal government.

We observed that the Liberals viewed Canadians the way P.T. Barnum viewed circus-goers for many years and we are sick of that on behalf of the NDP government.

I also caution that our name is Tucker not Sucker and we will not be led down the garden path if this is not all it is cracked up to be. If this is destined to fail or it has a poison pill in it we will be the first ones to be there to criticize it.

**Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we will be looking very closely at the bill to ensure it is in the interest of the public. What is very important right now is that the government understand the difference between accountability and conduct. Conduct and accountability are not the same things. The danger of the bill is that it could wind up causing gridlock in the public service.

As every member of the government knows, when we were in government we introduced a whole collection of solutions with respect to dealing with accountability within the government. We introduced new measures for crown corporations and new measures in true accountability. As the official opposition, we will be looking very closely—

**The Speaker:** I am afraid we have time limits on the statements in response because they are not to be longer than the original statement. Obviously that has created some difficulties.

\* \* \*

• (1010)

**PETITIONS**

## SOMALIA

**Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I have the pleasure to present a petition signed by some 30 people from my riding of Etobicoke Centre.

The petitioners are deeply worried about the ongoing challenges faced by Somalia in nurturing civil society and are calling upon the Canadian government to appoint a special envoy to Somalia. As well, Somalia is in the grips of a major drought and my constituents are urging the Canadian government to step up to the plate in this time of need. A famine's death march does not wait.

## CHILD CARE

**Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure to present another petition from concerned people in and around my constituency about the government's plans for child care.

They say, among other things, that 70% of women with children under the age of six are employed; that a \$100 a month taxable allowance amounts to a small child benefit and will not establish

new child care spaces; that child care is an everyday necessity; and that there is an urgent and immediate need for additional child care spaces.

The residents of Nova Scotia call upon the government to honour the early learning and child care agreement in principle and to fund it for a full five years.

\* \* \*

**QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER**

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**SPEECH FROM THE THRONE**

[English]

**RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON ADDRESS IN REPLY**

The House resumed from April 10 consideration of the motion, as amended, for an address to Her Excellency the Governor General in reply to her speech at the opening of the session.

**Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP):** To continue my remarks from yesterday, Mr. Speaker, also of great concern to the citizens of my riding of Parkdale—High Park is the issue of crime. As many know, a scourge of guns and gang violence has hit Toronto in recent months. For Toronto to thrive, its residents must feel safe. During the election campaign, I spoke of the need to deal seriously with violent crime. The throne speech mentions that “equally important” is the need to prevent crime before it takes root.

Many African Canadian parents in Toronto are worried sick about their kids. For crime to truly be prevented we need federal help to create new sources of opportunity for our young people, to keep community centres open and especially to help in the most vulnerable and economically depressed neighbourhoods.

The members of Parliament have to work together to prevent the flow of illegal firearms from the United States that end up on our streets, killing our young people. Only by working to eliminate handguns from our streets will we be helping to safeguard our urban centres like the city of Toronto.

*The Address*

The citizens of Toronto also face another danger from a different source, one that is less high profile, perhaps, but is becoming all too visible: smog, pollution and climate change. To tackle this problem we need more than platitudes in a throne speech. We need more than a promise to stay in the Kyoto protocol while ignoring its targets. That strategy seems vaguely familiar. I hope this is not a case of “meet the new boss, same as the old boss”.

We need concrete measures to reduce the smog and air pollution that kill thousands of Canadians every year. I was proud to bring Greenpeace and the Canadian Auto Workers together to help create the green car strategy for the NDP. We need to implement this and other innovative ideas so that we can clean our air and protect Canadian jobs at the same time.

I am proud to have been involved with the labour movement for many years and, as such, protecting decent paying jobs for Canadians is also a key priority for me. The government should know that you cannot simply mention working families without speaking in concrete terms as to how we are going to create and protect jobs.

The throne speech had no mention of industrial strategy, no mention of trade policy and agreements that threaten our workforce and no mention of protecting unionized workers with real anti-scab legislation. In my mind, this is simply not good enough. Working families need more than 1% or 2% off the GST. They need child care spaces. They need safe, clean cities. They need decent jobs.

As I mentioned earlier, the city of Toronto has to be more than a vital economic engine. It must be our cultural and artistic centre.

Former NDP culture critic Wendy Lill once said that “art is the soul of any great nation”. She was right, but it is more than that. Culture and the arts also represent jobs for Canadians. Twenty-five thousand Toronto jobs are tied to film and television production alone, yet there was no mention of culture in the throne speech. The decision of the CBC to cancel programs like *This is Wonderland* is having a profound effect on employment and also on our collective identity. We need a strong cultural sector in order to tell our stories as Canadians and protect our sovereignty.

Our sovereignty also depends on an independent foreign policy, one that does not see us blindly walk into George Bush's war on terror. I want us to support our brave men and women who are stationed all over the world, including in Afghanistan, by making sure that we fully debate their role in Parliament, as we started to do last night. If we claim that we are defending democracy abroad, then we must practise it in this chamber by voting on future missions and future deployments.

I know that the people of Parkdale—High Park and Toronto work hard and pay their taxes, but they told me at the doorsteps, in the subway stations and in the coffee shops during the election campaign that they do not mind paying these taxes if they see value for their taxes, if they see that money invested back into their communities in programs and incentives for their neighbourhoods. They want a beautiful waterfront. They want more child care spaces and more affordable education and training programs for their children. They want to see an end to smog days that start as early as February. They

want a city within a compassionate country that feeds and houses all its citizens as a very minimum.

In short, we want a Toronto that the whole country can be proud of. It is what I want too. That is why I am hoping to work with everyone in the House as an advocate for Toronto in Ottawa.

●(1015)

**Ms. Catherine Bell (Vancouver Island North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Parkdale—High Park for sharing her time with me.

I will begin by thanking the people of Vancouver Island North for the trust they have shown in me to be their representative. In the election campaign, I promised to make sure that Ottawa knows where Vancouver Island North is and what Vancouver Island North needs, a task I will take very seriously.

I am proud to say that I was born in the riding and have lived in a number of its communities. It is a very large area with some of the most beautiful landscapes in the country and contains many people who still exhibit that great pioneer spirit that created this country.

Vancouver Island North has the Pacific Ocean as its western boundary and the Strait of Georgia borders on the southeast. It is just over 52,000 square kilometres in size with 109,000 residents. That is two people per square kilometre. Some parts of it are only accessible by air or boat. Most people live in the towns and cities that have been built in and around the traditional industries of the area, which are forestry and fishing.

I listened carefully to the throne speech to hear what the government intends to do to address the serious concerns of people working in those industries. It said, “This Government recognizes the unique challenges faced by those who make their livelihood from our land and oceans in our vital natural resource and agriculture industries”.

Recognition is nice, but action is what is needed. The absence of action on major issues facing workers and their families in our forestry communities is a form of neglect that borders on abuse. We need concrete action to end the softwood lumber dispute and a comprehensive plan to ensure that the money, when it comes back to Canada, goes to the people in those communities who have been so dramatically affected by this trade dispute.

We need to end the practice of allowing raw logs to be exported from private land under federal jurisdiction. We need better stewardship of our forestry resources. We must ensure that it can provide jobs for this generation and many future generations while also respecting the environment.

*The Address*

Earning a living from the fishery is far too rapidly becoming a part of the history of Vancouver Island North. Our inability to be reasonable stewards of our ocean's resources is a sad testimony and a cruel indictment to the many people living in my riding.

Even when fish can be found, caught and landed, they, like the raw logs from our forests, are far too often trucked out of our communities to provide jobs for people in other places. It worries me not to see a single mention of our west coast fishery in the throne speech. We need leadership in Canada. We need to stop standing back and letting unsustainable practices threaten our wild fish stocks. We need to work with aquaculture companies to find a productive and sustainable way to farm fish. We need to shake off our complacent attitude, which in reality will only continue to pit people against each other in our coastal communities.

The pioneer spirit that I refer to shows up in the people who are working hard and investing their time and money in developing new sustainable energy sources. Whether working on common sense wind power or leading edge tidal power generators, people in my riding are looking for leadership from their federal government in moving us away from their reliance on fossil fuels. They are looking for substantive measures to achieve this goal. I look forward to working with these new pioneers to make real inroads in sustainable power generation and to ensure that vague promises made in the throne speech are turned into real and tangible results.

I want to shift gears just a little and mention the vital work done by the men and women in the armed forces based at CFB Comox. Like Canadian armed forces personnel everywhere, they are dedicated to the work they do to serve their country. They approach their dual tasks of defensive surveillance and search and rescue support with determination and professionalism, but they continue to work in outdated buildings that will not survive an earthquake and with planes and helicopters that have long passed their due dates.

The Conservatives made many promises in the election campaign with regard to our armed forces in general and CFB Comox in particular. The throne speech makes a mere reference to "a stronger military". I will be vigilant in reminding the government of its promises and working with it to keep those promises.

●(1020)

In its throne speech, the government states that it "will not try to do all things at once". One can argue that this is a prudent way to proceed, but it is my belief that some things cannot wait.

There are two more priorities that I want to outline. The first is the need for the federal government to work with communities across Canada to quickly and efficiently modernize and expand our infrastructure. I am told by elected municipal officials and first nations leaders throughout my riding that this cannot be left for another day. This must be done.

In the Comox valley, our cities and regional districts are struggling to come to terms with aging water and sewer systems. Growth caused by more and more people moving to this lovely area is putting a huge strain on infrastructure, which must be dealt with.

I recently met with Port Hardy mayor Hank Bood and members of his staff and council. They made it very clear that the federal government must share in the cost of upgrading and expanding their

sewage treatment facilities to end the pollution of nearby Stories Beach.

I left Port Hardy and drove a short distance down the highway to Fort Rupert, where I was invited to have lunch with the elders of the Kwakiutl Band. In the course of our discussion, the members of the band described the hardship they faced because they could not harvest the seafood that should be readily available to them from the beach on their reserve. That beach, the same one the mayor had spoken of, is badly contaminated and has been closed by health officials.

That brings me to the last concern I want to raise. I was honoured to receive significant support from the almost 20 first nations who live in Vancouver Island North. I look forward to continuing to meet and work with them. I will work with the government to ensure that the commitment in the throne speech to improve opportunities for aboriginal people in Canada is not mere empty words and unkept promises.

In keeping with my objective to bring to Ottawa the voices of the people I represent, I want to close with this passage from a report by Am Johal on the residential school student gathering held in Alert Bay in August last year. It states:

In the small island community of Alert Bay near northern Vancouver Island, hundreds of survivors of St. Michael's Residential School stood on the idyllic shoreline near the U'mista Cultural Centre. It was misty as the fog rolled in and perched on the calm water.

It was an enchanting setting. Canoes carrying some of the former students arrived at the school for a bittersweet reunion. As they came closer, one of the chiefs stood up from the canoe and asked for permission to come to shore.

Chief Bill Cranmer from the Namgis First Nation welcomed them in. They paddled the canoe in backwards as a gesture of friendship, rather than one of aggression, as is symbolized by paddling in from the front.

St. Michael's Residential School was open from 1929 to 1975. Over the weekend, more than 250 First Nations from all over British Columbia representing some 18 bands came to attend the healing ceremony.

"We used to be beaten for speaking our own language. We were removed from our own communities...we need to remove the trauma, so we can develop in the way we want to," said Chief Cranmer as he addressed the former students.

"We need to move forward and we hope you share with us the notion that this shouldn't have happened to us or our children. The future belongs to us. We need to rebuild our history."

As the Coast Salish dancers began preparations for their healing dance, Chief Cranmer said, "We have come to look past what's happened to you. We have come here for our ancestors. We can find time to move to a better place".

As a line formed inside the school, the hallways and classrooms brought back memories that had many people bent over and sobbing with tears. Some needed to be physically supported. Relatives and friends clung to one another.

Back at the Big House, another speaker said, "It is time for healing and reconciliation. The colonisers brought an oppression which made us oppress ourselves."

Chief Cranmer once again addressed the gathering. "We used to line up to pray to a God we didn't believe in.

Our role models weren't positive.

*The Address*

We suffered from diseases brought in by colonisation, the residential school system which hurt our culture, and the potlatch prohibition.

They took away our humanity.”

The throne speech talks about building a stronger Canada. On behalf of the people of my riding, I will keep their concerns in the forefront as we work in this Parliament to achieve that goal.

•(1025)

[Translation]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Before moving on to the questions and comments period, I wish to inform the House that because of the ministerial statement, Government Orders will be extended by three minutes.

[English]

**Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, let me offer my congratulations to you on your new role in the House.

I want to thank my colleagues from Parkdale—High Park and Vancouver Island North for their speeches this morning. They both raised some very important points, in particular, dealing with the concerns of their regions, and very different regions of this country they are. Vancouver Island North is very different from downtown Toronto. They were both very articulate about the needs of their particular communities. I want to ask my colleague from Vancouver Island North to comment on two things.

Lately in the House we have heard about the delay in the settlement of the residential schools question. That is causing frustration and concerns especially for some older people who are due compensation and may not live to see it. There is talk that their compensation may be delayed into 2007.

I also want to ask her to comment on something the member for Parkdale—High Park raised, which was the need for anti-scab legislation in Canada in the federal jurisdiction. In our home province of British Columbia we have that kind of legislation. It was introduced by the former NDP government. Interestingly enough, it was not undone by the current Liberal government in British Columbia because it works so effectively to settle labour disputes, to settle disputes in the workplace in British Columbia.

Could the hon. member comment on the usefulness and the importance of legislation dealing with the question of replacement workers?

•(1030)

**Ms. Catherine Bell:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate you on your ascension to Deputy Speaker.

Regarding the delay in the residential school payment, the residents of Vancouver Island North and first nations communities across the board have said to me that this needs to come forth now. They have waited many, many years.

The effects of the residential school abuse are not just found in the elders. Some of them have passed away. It is a multi-generational issue. It has affected their children and their children's children. It has affected their ability to become productive citizens in their communities. They want healing. They want to be able to move on,

to move past this and to build their communities in a more positive way.

The government has an obligation to first nations and we want to see that followed through in a very quick manner. We should not tolerate delays because first nations have suffered far too long.

Regarding anti-scab legislation, this is something I have long fought for, of course, being from the labour movement. We saw a perfect example last year with the Telus dispute. That dispute went on for months and months. People who had a legal right to strike were on the streets while others were doing their jobs.

If we had that legislation in place, it would limit the length of strikes. We would see a quicker end to disputes, we could move forward and there would not be such tensions in the workplace.

**Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, last night in the debate on Afghanistan, the NDP members repeatedly made bizarre and erroneous comments on our military involvement in Afghanistan, labelling it as war making. They had real issues with the fact that our troops are there on the ground providing the security required by CIDA, the RCMP and foreign affairs members trying to enable the Afghani people to develop the security and the democratic, political and non-political infrastructure that is required for their country to enable them to stand on their own feet.

My question is on health care. The leader of the NDP received health care in a private clinic. Yet he gets on his high horse and lambastes the involvement of private health care in our global health care system in Canada.

I ask the member, does she or does she not support the presence of private health care within a mixed system in Canada involving a strengthened public health care system, but allowing private services to occur?

•(1035)

**Ms. Catherine Bell:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his comments regarding the military. Because I did not get an opportunity last night to address some of my concerns, I would like to talk about that now.

I want to remind people that there is a very large air force base in my riding, CFB Comox. I had the opportunity to tour that base with the colonel and some of the other military brass a number of weeks ago. We had a very frank discussion on what is happening in Afghanistan and what our troops are doing there from their perspective. I was able to ask some very serious questions. It was a good discussion and I am glad that we had it.

I learned many things while I was there. I met with some men and women who had just come back from Afghanistan. They had been building some infrastructure over there. One of the things they told me was that they might not agree with what we are saying, but they will lay down their lives for our right to say it. I thought that was very poignant based on the debate that we had last night where some of us felt that our rights to say what we felt in this House were being diminished.

*The Address*

**Hon. Andy Scott (Fredericton, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, congratulations to you. Having served this House longer than anyone here, it seems a fitting place to find you. In his absence, I would also congratulate the Speaker on his re-election.

Mr. Speaker, I am splitting my time with the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Louis.

As this is my first occasion since the last election to speak to the House, I want to thank very much my family, my wife Denise, my sons Nathan and Nicholas, and my newest son Noah, who is only eight weeks old. My wife was very much expecting Noah during the campaign, so she gets added appreciation for having gone through the election campaign expecting a baby on the 24th of January.

I also want to thank the people of the riding of Fredericton. No Liberal has been elected twice in Fredericton since Confederation and I have had the honour to serve the people of Fredericton riding for my fifth election. I do appreciate the honour and the opportunity to represent the good people of that riding here.

Given the nature of the standings in this Parliament, we are all going to have to work very hard to make Canadians proud of the institution. I hope to do my part by being as positive as I can be. There is a role in opposition to point out limitations and inadequacies, but that can be a constructive role.

Within the Speech from the Throne, the references to the soldiers in Afghanistan, to dealing with the Chinese head tax and to picking up on waiting times initiatives are all positive and the government is to be commended. Having said that, the repeated commitment to a limited number of priorities does lend itself to the observation that some very important things were left out. I would like to enumerate a few of them.

First, as the infrastructure and communities critic for the official opposition, there is a glaring omission having to do with investment in infrastructure, to which the previous speaker from the New Democratic Party spoke, not only because of the importance of these investments but also because of the importance of the relationship that the former government was able to establish with municipalities. Having been an infrastructure minister in the past, I can say it was well received and very important to the country.

Also left out was a reference to the Indian residential schools agreement and the Kelowna accord. In particular, on the question of Indian residential schools, as was mentioned by the last speaker, I would just make the point that the answers to the questions on Indian residential schools have been that we are waiting for the final agreement. The reason there was an agreement on an advance payment was that we knew the final agreement would take some time and many of the elderly people perhaps would not be able to share in that. An advance payment is, by definition, something that would come in advance of a final agreement. I think the government should reconsider that position.

There was no reference to research and development, or making universities more affordable to students. In the case of research and development in particular, we have come a great way. In terms of publicly funded, university based research, in the early 1990s Canada was in the middle of the pack and now we are leading the world in this area. The research chairs program, the indirect cost

program and increases in all the research granting agencies have had that effect. I would hope when the budget is presented that the absence of reference to research and universities in the throne speech will be mitigated by good news in the budget. I see the Minister of Finance grinning. I hope that is a good sign and not that he just finds me funny.

● (1040)

Regional economic development is critically important to Atlantic Canada. I am concerned about that. During the last campaign a lot of references were made to the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, which were not necessarily the most positive. I hope the investment has been made, particularly in innovation. The Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency is an entirely different institution than it was when the Liberals took office in 1993, with a new commitment to communities and innovation primarily. I hope that continues and is in fact enhanced.

I want to acknowledge the regional minister for the province of New Brunswick, the Minister of Veterans Affairs. That causes me to think about agent orange and herbicide spraying at CFB Gagetown in my constituency. The area covered is shared by my constituency and the constituencies of the Minister of Veterans Affairs and the member for Fundy Royal. I have great optimism, because of his awareness of the subject and his commitment to his constituents, that the Minister of Veterans Affairs will be able to move this file quickly.

I was also surprised at the lack of reference to what I consider to be a huge demographic challenge facing the country. It is most acute in Atlantic Canada, but I think it visits all of rural Canada, in particular, in terms of the shrinking and aging population. It simply cannot be sustained.

Finally, this is the 25th anniversary of the International Year of Persons with Disabilities and the obstacles report, which was a seminal piece of work on disabilities. By leaving that out of the throne speech, I hope the government does not intend to see that year go without attention. I am optimistic that it will not.

There was no reference to culture, which has been the subject of many questions in question period, and I will await the budget to see what will happen in terms of the commitments that were made to the Canada Council and the CBC in particular.

Specifically, on the infrastructure program, my concern is that the Canadian strategic infrastructure fund is, for all intents and purposes, committed fully. Therefore, if this budget does not see a renewal in the Canadian strategic infrastructure fund, not only will that be a huge loss to Canada in terms of our ability to invest both in large and small projects, depending on how the applications are organized, but I think it also signals troubling things for the municipal rural infrastructure fund. It would signal the fact that perhaps some of the speeches that have been made in other House about the constitutionality of the former government's commitment to communities through infrastructure spending might in fact see those programs not renewed. That would be a bad thing, not only for the communities that are dependent on these funds but also for a positive relationship in a modern society.

*The Address*

The former government invested between \$1.1 billion and \$1.4 billion a year. To my knowledge the commitment made by the government is \$2 billion over five years. If the Canadian strategic infrastructure fund and MRIF are not renewed, that would constitute a 60% cut in infrastructure spending by the government. I will await the budget to see if that holds up. I suggest there are many worthy projects across Canada. In my province the Saint John Harbour cleanup is a significantly important issue.

On the question of R and D, it is an area where there was a lot of investment made and I hope it continues.

I mentioned Indian residential schools. Let me also speak of the Kelowna accord. While Indian residential schools deal with our legacy, which needed to be reconciled, the Kelowna accord speaks to the future, a significant investment in education and housing. At the end of the day, these things are not just about principle. They are also about investment and it is long overdue.

• (1045)

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I know the member has done a great deal of work in advancing the files of regional development and investment in our cities and communities. The issue of investing in our communities is one which has maybe taken a bit of a back seat in the throne speech.

In the last government commitments were made with regard to sharing gas taxes and other ways to assist communities with their infrastructure, transit and other important priorities, which are key in terms of the prosperity file. Could the member comment on how investing in our cities and communities is good for all Canadians?

**Hon. Andy Scott:** Mr. Speaker, one of the previous speakers spoke to the fact that Vancouver Island was having a difficult time, because of a large growth in its communities, with building the kind of infrastructure necessary to support that growth. There is a cost associated with both growth and shrinkage. At the end of the day, when populations become smaller, they have a smaller tax base but they need this kind of investment to sustain infrastructure that was built, in many, cases for larger communities. Unfortunately, that is very much a reality in Atlantic Canada.

What we need to look at specifically are the programs themselves: the municipal rural infrastructure fund; the Canadian strategic infrastructure fund; the border infrastructure fund; the gas tax program; and the two \$400 million per year for two years transit fund. The transit fund was the result of an amendment to the budget last year. There can be no question that it is critically important in terms of congestion, Kyoto, air quality and social cohesion. I call on the government to recognize this worthy investment. It would be a larger winner for the government if it simply made this a part of the budget going forward beyond those two years.

With respect to the rest, I hope the government will build on the successes we have had in these relationships in building Canadian infrastructure.

**Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I too wish to congratulate you on your acceptance of the Deputy Speaker position.

The member spoke about development of infrastructure programs, but he missed one. Although it is not directly related to the federal

government, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities green fund is very important. I had the opportunity to sit on that fund for five years. We invested innovatively in infrastructure to achieve green results across the country.

We need to invest in our country in ways that can lead us to a greener future. Investments that simply mimic growth, that do not use the best available technology, that do not move the country forward in ways that are useful to the greater good of the environment and for the citizens of the future are infrastructure investments that are not worthwhile.

Would the member agree that the importance of infrastructure investment toward improving our green future is something the government should take very strongly in the next while?

• (1050)

**Hon. Andy Scott:** Mr. Speaker, this is a good example of the benefit of the relationship that the former government had with the municipalities, and I hope the government carries it forward.

The green fund is a result of the original infrastructure Canada program. The green fund was carved out of that program. It was used by the Canadian Federation of Municipalities for the very purpose of being innovative and to reward communities that wished to do something innovative in terms of greening the country and, in particular, in their infrastructure programming.

My colleague asked if I would commit to that fact. The reality is that during my tenure as minister responsible for infrastructure, the amount of the municipal rural infrastructure program that had to be green went from 50% to 60% of the total. In my own province of New Brunswick it is 80%. Our commitment to the environment and using the infrastructure program for environmental purposes is obvious.

I do think large investment in infrastructure has to be considered not only for the capital that it provides to municipalities, but also for the relationship that the capital investment has made. It allows us to engage in greater planning, share best practices and, as the hon. member mentioned, innovative practices as well.

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour to represent the citizens of Lac-Saint-Louis in Parliament. I believe the West Island of Montreal, a large section of which falls within the boundaries of Lac-Saint-Louis, is a unique and politically significant part of Canada. It is unique because of its geographic location on the great St. Lawrence River and because of the linguistic and cultural makeup of its population. It is significant because of the insight it can bring to our nation's politics by virtue of being a microcosm of the larger country.

*The Address*

[Translation]

Lac-Saint-Louis is a community of minorities. Its anglophone population is a minority in Quebec while its francophone population is a minority within Canada. As for the number of other linguistic and cultural groups that enrich the life of the riding, not only are they minorities in Canada and in North America, but often they are new to the West.

[English]

No doubt, because of its diversity, the West Island is a community of tolerance and moderation. It is a community that rejects radical change that can disrupt meaningful human connections. It is a community that prizes unity over division. It is a community inspired by political visions, rooted in high-minded principles rather than by ideologies that encourage retreat into one's own space. Lac-Saint-Louis is anything but a community of firewalls.

The people of Lac-Saint-Louis are committed federalists. In 1995 they voted massively "no" in Quebec's second referendum. They support the federal Clarity Act adopted by the previous Liberal government. They believe that political decisions should be clear and informed and that rights such as the right to remain in Canada as a Canadian citizen cannot be suppressed by a simple majority of votes in a highly charged plebiscite on a question that is the object of wordplay.

The people of Lac-Saint-Louis know Canada is not a political straightjacket, that it is not, as the Bloc likes to tell us, an overly centralized and centralizing state. In the United States approximately 80% of federal transfers to state and local governments are conditional grants. In Canada no less than 76% are now unconditional. These figures do not portray a rigid, constricting and inflexible Canadian federalism.

The Conservatives have confirmed their support for a deconstructed federalism. They do this subtly and softly by, for example, acquiescing to the theory of the fiscal imbalance. They sometimes do so more explicitly, as did the Prime Minister during the first question period last week when he spoke of a centralizing federalism.

[Translation]

The fiscal imbalance theory suggests that Quebec and the other provinces are financially mistreated by federalism. The residents of Lac-Saint-Louis know that is not true. If the Conservatives go ahead and modify equalization by removing oil revenues from the equation, then provinces without oil, such as Quebec, will certainly suffer.

The Conservatives are playing a dangerous and deceptive game by agreeing with the Bloc Québécois on the existence of a fiscal imbalance when so many facts disprove this theory.

The debt to GDP ratio of the provinces is far less than that of the federal government. Furthermore, federal transfers to the provinces increase more quickly than federal revenue.

What is more, all the provinces have posted budgetary surpluses in four of the past six years.

● (1055)

[English]

Finally, when Ottawa made cuts to federal transfers to the provinces in 1995, as part of its successful efforts to slay the deficit dragon created by the Mulroney government, the cuts imposed on the provinces were proportionately much less than the ones Ottawa made to its own programs. If there is a fiscal imbalance in Canada, it is not between different levels of government but between governments and individual taxpayers, and that fiscal imbalance, the real fiscal imbalance, has not been addressed in the throne speech.

Last fall the Liberal government introduced the second phase of its tax relief plan for Canadians. The first phase was the multi-year, \$100 billion tax cut announced in the year 2000. In the fall the Liberal government forged ahead and reduced the tax rate on the lowest income bracket and raised the amount Canadians could earn tax-free. The Conservative government owes it to Canadians to cancel its plans to do away with those Liberal tax cuts, otherwise Canadians will see their paycheques, after deductions, shrink this July.

Canadians need and want meaningful and honest tax relief. Canadian families are overtaxed. Many are overburdened with mounting household debts, which put tremendous pressure on family life. Canada now has a negative savings rate of 0.4%. Does the Conservative government really care about families, or is family just a convenient buzzword in the Conservative campaign lexicon?

It is hard to find an economist in Canada who would agree that, given the choice between lightening the tax burden on Canadians through income tax cuts or doing so by reducing the GST, the government should opt for a GST cut. If both are possible, then fine, but aggressive income tax cuts should take priority.

First, a GST cut encourages even more consumer debt and overstimulates an economy whose problem is not weak consumer spending but weak business investment. More investment would lead to higher economic growth in a competitive global economy, where staying ahead of the productivity curve, through capital investment, is the name of the game.

Second, a GST cut will not transfer more money directly into people's pockets. Liberal income tax cuts, on the other hand, would produce extra disposable income for Canadian families that would, in the aggregate, be channelled into productivity-enhancing business investment.

[Translation]

A number of companies that offer mortgages, such as banks, do not even charge GST on their products and services. In those cases, reducing the GST will not lead to savings for the consumer. It will only reduce costs and increase profits for the company.

*The Address*

Some retailers include GST in their prices. Movie theatre operators will not decide from one day to the next to reduce the price to see a movie from \$9.95 to \$9.86 just because the GST has been cut by 1%. Hairdressers are not going to lower their prices either, and some corporations will benefit simply from their monopoly position to increase their prices, thereby profiting from the bit of play created by the GST reduction. Gas stations are a good example.

[English]

The Conservative GST promise was politically clever and strategic. Some call it calculating. Whatever it was, it was not good policy. As *Globe and Mail* columnist, Jeffrey Simpson, has said:

Of course, having campaigned on the GST cut, [the Prime Minister] will be obligated to implement it, thereby costing the federal treasury \$5-billion-plus and aimlessly stimulating an economy that doesn't need that kind of stimulus. After that, however, the Conservatives' mental cupboard is shockingly bare....

Mr. Simpson goes on to say:

—the Prime Minister knows his party's election platform was just that — a political document that sufficed for enticing the electorate but will not do for serious governing.

While the Conservative government has opted for a clever but weak tax policy, similarly its so-called child care policy is one dimensional, lacks vision and fails to address the tax system's bias against families with a stay at home parent. Although it was sold primarily as a measure intended to help stay at home parents, as the *Globe and Mail* editorial board has said, the Prime Minister's plan is "little more than a symbolic gesture" toward these parents.

Again, smoke and mirrors.

Let us be honest. The promised \$1,200 taxable annual payment to families is an improvised attempt at a tax cut, but not an honest and sweeping income tax cut like those introduced by the previous government.

The Liberal government pursued an intelligent and comprehensive approach to helping Canadian families. It outlined broad income tax cuts and at the same time negotiated child care agreements with 10 provinces to help build a network of quality, developmental child care. This flexible system would not only have been available to parents who work full time. It would also have been available to those who wanted to use the system part time because one parent was at home. The Liberal government believed it was possible to have parallel policies that reconciled both these contemporary Canadian realities.

The Liberal government took a major step in addressing the needs of children and families, including those with a stay at home parent, when it created the national child benefit in 1998. For example, the national child benefit includes an annual supplement of \$243 for each child under seven years of age when no child care expenses are claimed on the family's income tax return. The government should increase this amount for stay at home parents while at the same time maintaining previous Liberal commitments to support a quality educational child care system for families who need it.

The problems of modern societies are complex. Their challenges cannot be met by superficial approaches. The throne speech is a thin

document. It is a sketchy road map for a government that is travelling light and not intending to go far on behalf of Canadians.

• (1100)

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciated the Liberal member's discourse today in the House and want to raise with him the difficult situation that families are facing today as a result of neglect by the federal government over the last dozen or so years.

I know the member is relatively new to this place so he cannot bear all the sins of the past, but it is important for him to address the problem we face today in the House which is, among other things, the resolution of finally having a meaningful child care policy for all families. It is one thing to criticize the present administration but it is another thing to take some responsibility for neglecting to address this area over many years and after many promises.

It is important for Canadians to know how the Liberals can stand today and blame others for inaction on the day care file when, after 13 years, promises made were never kept. I wonder if the member can justify in any way that kind of inaction on a clearly defined area of need identified by his own party for many years and which has placed many families in a very difficult situation.

Today we are trying to come to terms with this by trying to convince the present government to make some changes to its promises and to recognize that it must invest in child care spaces to meet this need, as well as provide some tax incentives to businesses and perhaps a baby allowance to Canadian families. However it must also recognize the need for investment in a child care program across this country if we are ever going to meet the needs of families and allow them to contribute to the best of their abilities to our economy without worrying about the care, nurturing and protection of their children.

It is important for the member to address that concern and to explain to Canadians the inaction for more than a decade when the problem was clearly identified, I would say, 30 years ago.

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia:** Mr. Speaker, not for one minute do I doubt the hon. member's commitment to the well-being of Canadian families and Canadian children.

Thirty years ago is going back a long time and, as the hon. member mentioned, I am a recent addition to the House. I am proud to be here and proud to be serving my constituents of Lac-Saint-Louis but I have not yet been sitting here for two years.

One of the major initiatives my government took in my first mandate was to sign child care deals with 10 provinces. The point of my remarks in my speech were not to criticize so much as to suggest that the taxable payment of \$1,200 to Canadian families is fine and is appreciated by many, no doubt, but the fact remains that it is a tax cut in disguise, a tax cut that is limited to people with children under six years of age. The point I was trying to make is that it is not a visionary approach to creating a national network of early learning and child care centres.

*The Address*

If we are going to have tax cuts let us call them tax cuts but let us do as the Liberals. Let us have income tax cuts but at the same time let us also invest in a child care system.

My intent is not to simply criticize but to point out that we should pursue at least two objectives at the same time. I believe it is the role of our party in Parliament to push for the government to continue in the direction that we mapped out in our last year and a half.

● (1105)

**Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand today to resume the debate on the address in reply to the Speech from the Throne. I will be splitting my time today with the Mr. Obhrai, the hon. member for Calgary East.

I would like to take this moment to congratulate you—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. I thank the hon. member for his congratulations but I have to remind him, as I have reminded a number of members in the last few days, that the practice in the House is not to refer to members by their surnames but either by their ridings or by their positions. The hon. member just violated that rule.

**Mr. Bev Shipley:** I apologize, Mr. Speaker. I do want to congratulate you on your position and obviously those of the Speaker and the other deputies.

I want to thank the people of Lambton—Kent—Middlesex for their overwhelming support in the election last January in giving me the responsibility and the honour of representing them in the House. I also want to thank my family, especially my wife Barb, for their encouragement and support. I also want to emphasize that during my tenure as MP for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex I will represent all constituents in the House regardless of political affiliation.

It is important for Canadians to realize what will be accomplished during the 39th Parliament. The Speech from the Throne provides the guidelines for what our government wants to achieve during its mandate. Of course we will be focussing on the five priorities: clean up Ottawa by introducing and passing the federal accountability act; lower taxes for all Canadians by cutting the GST from 7% to 6% and then to 5%; ensure safe communities by cracking down on gun, gang and drug crimes; give parents choice in child care with a \$1,200 annual payment for each child under six and by helping to create 125,000 child care spaces over five years; and work with the provinces and territories to establish a patient wait time guarantee.

This past weekend a small community in southwestern Ontario was crushed when a farmer made a grizzly discovery in a field near Shedden. It has been speculated that the crime committed was gang related. This incident makes it quite clear that violent crime is not a phenomenon that is isolated in large cities. It reaches into suburban and rural communities. Our families have lost the sense of safety and security they deserve. Gangs, drugs and guns have no place in our community.

Our position is simple: Canadian families have a right to feel safe and secure in their communities. If we are to protect our Canadian way of life we need to crack down on violent crimes, and that is what this new government will do.

Cracking down on crime and ensuring safe communities is a high priority for our government, including stiffer penalties for serious crimes and fixing our correctional system so that serious crime means serious time. The government will tackle crime. It will propose changes to the Criminal Code to provide tougher sentences for violent and repeat offenders. It will help prevent crime by putting more police on the street and improving the security at our borders.

The wasteful \$2 billion, ineffective long gun registry program has been placed as a burden on law-abiding citizens and does nothing to keep the guns out of the hands of criminals. We believe that directing funds away from the long gun registry and putting that money toward more police officers is a responsible thing to do.

Our government will work with the provinces and the territories in aiding communities to provide hope and opportunity for our youth and to end the cycle of violence that can lead to broken communities and broken lives. Sentencing a young violent offender to probation is just not responsible. Our current laws focus on protecting the rights of the criminal rather than the rights of the victim. While we want to rehabilitate our young offenders, our current laws seem to make it easy for youth to choose crime over an education or an honest job. We must impose stiffer sentencing for those who choose a life of crime, especially violent crime.

We must also do more to protect our youth from sexual predators. We will raise the age of sexual consent from 14 to 16 years. We will create a DNA bank of convicted sex offenders and dangerous offenders and establish a zero tolerance policy for all forms of child pornography.

● (1110)

The government is setting a new direction with the tabling of the accountability act and is setting the example in sending a message to all Canadians, a message of hope that will bring honesty and integrity back to Parliament. We want Canadians to know that it is possible for Canadians to have an accountable and honest government. For far too long, Canadians have been subjected to Liberal governments that treated taxpayers' dollars as if they were their own. Honest, hard-working Canadians who pay their taxes and play by the rules saw millions of their tax dollars laundered to Liberal friends.

This is a black mark in our great history. However, it has taught us a valuable lesson. It has taught us that we need to tighten the rules. We will prevent an irresponsible act like this from happening again. Our new accountability act will do just that.

It is possible to eliminate undue influence by big money spending donors by banning large personal and corporate donations to political parties. It is possible to make the federal government more transparent and accountable by increasing the power of independent officers of Parliament, such as the Auditor General.

*The Address*

It is possible to provide real protection to whistleblowers, both public servants and other Canadians, who wish to come forward with information about unethical or illegal activities. I, along with my colleagues, believe that we need to give Canadians the good, clean government they expect and deserve.

The other matter I would like to touch on is the state of agriculture in this country today. Last week we saw thousands of farmers exercising their right to organize and speak freely. Let me say that when farmers speak in this country, we will listen.

Our new government is sensitive to the needs of Canadian producers. It is interesting to see the members from the opposite side of the House criticize our government on this file. During his short time as Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Mr. Strahl has travelled across this country. He has met with—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. I cautioned the hon. member earlier not to use the surnames of members of the House and he did it again. I would ask him not to do it any more.

**Mr. Bev Shipley:** Mr. Speaker, during his short time in office, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food has crossed this country. He has met with countless grassroots producers, including those in my riding, and I thank him for that.

He has a great understanding of problems facing our producers, problems that were started and fueled by the past Liberal government, the main one being a flawed, irresponsible CAIS program.

It is now our job to right the previous wrongs. Being a producer for over 30 years, I know how difficult things have become for those who farm. If there has ever been any hope for our industry over the last few years, it is now.

Agriculture is Canada's second largest industry. This industry, especially the primary producer, has subsidized our cheap food policy in this country. It is time that Canadian producers are provided with the support they deserve. Unlike the past government, this government has made a commitment to agriculture, to give it hope, and to give it a future. It is time to turn over a new leaf for agriculture.

This government will get tough on crime. This government will crack down on guns, gangs and drugs. This government will change how Parliament works, so that it will be known by the people of Canada to be honest, open, accountable and with integrity.

• (1115)

**Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend my new colleague to the House on his speech. I want to ask him specifically about a couple of things I thought were missing from the Speech from the Throne and see if he might have a few facts as to where he thinks the government may be going. He spoke a couple of times about opportunities for youth. The Speech from the Throne specifically addressed families in a lot of cases, that these were the priorities of Canadian families.

One of the key priorities for Canadian families is education, education in the public schools, but also post-secondary education. Many Canadian families, I am sure the hon. member would agree, are worried about how they will afford to send their children for

post-secondary education, be it to university, community college, apprenticeship training or whatever.

The last government made great strides in research and innovation, taking Canada from the lowest in the G-7 to the top of the G-7 in publicly funded research. The issue now has become access to education. How will students afford a post-secondary degree.

We introduced things like millennium scholarships and the learning bonds, and last year in the economic update we introduced an expansion of the Canada access grants for Canadians most in need, which would be disabled Canadians, aboriginal Canadians as well as Canadians from low income families. In the campaign, it became an issue when we introduced a 50-50 plan to assist all Canadian families with education.

In light of the fact that education is such a priority, and the word “education” did not show up in the Speech from the Throne, I wonder if the hon. member might be able to share with me what he thinks the government will be doing to help Canadian students get post-secondary education.

**Mr. Bev Shipley:** Mr. Speaker, it is true that education is important and we recognize that. When I talk about the issues of crime and keeping our young people off the streets, which entices them into a life of crime, we know that it is important to give them an education. Part of our strategy and part of our platform is to help and enhance further education in terms of students beyond post-secondary education. We wanted to talk about how we are going to give them opportunities and grants, and to build on the skills that youth possess. I look forward to having that discussion with the member opposite.

We are certainly focusing on our five priorities. They will be the hub of this government going forward. We have a number of other initiatives that we will be following up on, and certainly, making it easier for students to get through their education is one of those.

**Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member indicated that the GST cut this government has proposed will benefit all Canadians. This statement needs some clarification.

The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives recently released a report that shows that the benefits from this tax were extremely skewed for upper income Canadians. Some 48% of families in Canada have incomes of \$40,000 or less. The average take for these families from the Conservative cut will be less than \$120. On the other hand, the top 5% of families earning \$150,000 will average almost \$1,000 in tax benefits.

Does the hon. member, who quite obviously fits into the \$150,000 bracket, feel that he is representing all his constituents when he supports this government on this particular tax measure?

• (1120)

**Mr. Bev Shipley:** Mr. Speaker, I need to also remind the hon. member that I farm. That, over the past years, takes away some of that initiative in terms of how our tax structure will affect me.

*The Address*

Having said that, it is clear that the GST is a form of tax that this government and the people of Canada want. We have said in our campaign, and it is part of our five priorities, that we will reduce the GST from 7% to 6%, and then to 5%. This tax affects every person in this country regardless of how much they make. It is a tax for all people of Canada.

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, may I join the others who have congratulated you on your position as Deputy Speaker. When Parliament began, you were sitting next to me. I had this idea that your booming, thundering voice would be a problem for my ears. Now that you are in the Speaker's Chair, I am delighted to see you there.

This is my first speech in the 39th Parliament. I would like to thank the people of Calgary East for electing me for the fourth time and with an even higher margin. I want to thank people from across the country who have generously supported my re-election. I also wish to thank my family, my spouse Neena, my daughters Priti, Kaajal, and my son Aman, who stood by me during my election campaigns over all these years.

On January 23 Canadians asked for a change and they elected a new Conservative government. During the election we told Canadians what this party would do. What is more important is that Canadians told us that they wanted safer communities. Canadians are concerned about the urban crime problem, particularly as it relates to guns, gangs and drugs. They wanted tougher sentences for those who commit serious crimes, particularly those involving guns. I received a letter from a constituent in Calgary. This is what he said:

We bought our house in 1984 when this part of Calgary - Marlborough Park - was quiet and sleepy. You could leave your door open, and I mean wide open, go to Banff for a day, return and find nothing touched. And I know what I am writing because it happened to me once.

I know things have changed everywhere in the world, not only here in my riding. Recent events are forcing me to ask myself, as the elected representative here, as to what officials like myself are doing to resolve this dramatically escalating issue. This is a concern that we have heard right across this nation.

Conservatives have a long history of fighting for the criminal justice system that deals with crime in our society. As a matter of fact, in the last three parliaments I have myself introduced private member's bills for tougher sentencing for break and enter, asking for a minimum of two years for repeat offenders. Statistically, it has been shown that those who commit break and enter are more often repeat offenders because it is a very profitable business for them. Once they commit the crime and go for sentencing, they receive a light sentence. Then it becomes a profitable venture.

This is why Canadians want to see that we are tough on crime. My party campaigned on this plank. Therefore, as we have heard in the Speech from the Throne, we have pointed out our five priorities. One of those five priorities is to ensure that crime does not pay in this country. If a person commits a crime, there will be punishment. This is a part of our platform and that is one of the Conservative Party's five priorities that the government has outlined. People rely on the government to ensure that our streets and communities are safe, so that our children and families can live in peace.

The Conservative Party has always fought for mandatory minimum penalties for those who use guns in the commission of a crime. The RCMP deaths in northern Alberta, the Boxing Day shooting that took place in Toronto, and yesterday's massacre were all done with guns. This indicates that those who use guns in the commission of a crime need to face serious sentencing with minimum penalties. That is what we will be doing. It will become one of the priorities of this government.

•(1125)

We will implement the solutions that address these problems rather than waste money on things like the gun registry. The gun registry has been here for a while. In this House time after time we have stated how the gun registry has become ineffective. In no way has there been a decline in crimes committed with guns. The registry has just created more bureaucracy and has made life difficult for ordinary Canadians.

We are looking for conditional sentences that will ensure that those convicted of a crime causing serious harm do not serve sentences at home, but that those who are convicted of violent crimes serve real prison time. Some will say that we are hard-nosed Conservatives with no compassion and that we want to throw all those guys in jail. No, we are not talking about that. We are talking about violent crimes. We are talking about making our streets safe.

Our system will also focus on ensuring that we provide to those youth who have strayed from the path, not tough sentencing but hope to go back into the community. That is also the priority of the government. One should not say that we are just solidly committed and heartless in the sentencing for crime for everybody. We are saying that for the youth that have strayed, we will provide resources and money to ensure that they become productive citizens of this country.

We cannot close our eyes to the fact that violent crime has escalated. We need to take dramatic action. The government will put more police on the streets. That is one way of ensuring that our streets become safer. I received a letter from a constituent who is concerned about crime on the streets. Putting more police on the streets will give confidence to people that our streets are safer.

We also want to improve the security at the borders. We want to ensure that those who maintain our borders also have the weapons to ensure that they feel secure as well.

Most important, we will work with the provinces and the territories to help communities provide hope and opportunity for youth. We will be supporting crime prevention programs and we will invest in youth at risk programs.

The government has five clear mandates. The government is focused on five areas. This is a minority government. We do not know when we will be back at the polls. We do not make throne speeches like the Liberals used to do. They would put everything together and not deliver on anything. We want to deliver on the promises we made.

*The Address*

•(1130)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my honourable colleague for his speech.

Let us examine the facts. In the Speech from the Throne, the government stated that it would create 125,000 new daycare spaces. I do not think that will be nearly enough. Nevertheless, the government must not only support daycares and other organizations in creating these spaces and making them available, it must also guarantee this support and ensure resources. I am talking about financial resources.

The Speech from the Throne addressed the issue of early childhood development. If the new government eliminates the \$5 billion child care program we established, can my honourable colleague explain how the government plans to reduce the cost of daycare? This is a cost parents must bear.

I would also like him to explain how this new government's new plan will allow workers to earn a decent salary.

This new plan must include funding for daycare infrastructure and the necessary resources. Given these three elements, if the government eliminates the \$5 billion agreement signed with the provinces and territories, can the honourable member explain to us how it can reduce the cost or increase funding and necessary resources for Canadian parents and children?

[*English*]

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** Mr. Speaker, on January 23 Canadians demanded a change. During the election campaign the Liberals came up with all sorts of programs, but Canadians did not buy their programs. That is why those members are sitting on that side of the House. Otherwise they would have been sitting on this side.

The fact of the matter is we believe that Canadian parents know how to raise their children. That is why we will be giving them \$1,200 for every child under six. We believe that Canadian parents know how best to raise their children, and not what the Liberals said, that people will buy popcorn and beer. We trust Canadians. They know how to raise their children. Why do the Liberals think they know how best to raise children?

We are interested in early childhood development. We have come up with a program that Canadians want. It is one of our five priorities. That is why they elected us to sit on this side of the House.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague on his speech. I have some comments.

I understand that the Conservative Party wants to reduce crime in Canada because crime is on the increase. The party's platform calls for tougher sentences for criminal offences. But paradoxically, the Conservative Party wants to make cuts to child care in Quebec and Canada. Personally, I believe that the child care system does a great deal to prevent crime.

In Quebec, day care centres play an important screening and prevention role. To reduce crime, we have to do more than put people in jail; to reduce crime, we also have to prevent it. Day care centres and institutionalized child care systems help reduce crime through various prevention activities that target children under six. These activities continue in the schools.

I would like to hear what the hon. member has to say about this. I have some concern about the proposed approach, which seems to consist in criminalizing everything and putting people in jail. We have to punish criminal offences, but we also have to work on preventing crime.

•(1135)

[*English*]

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai:** Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member that we need to have measures to prevent people from straying from the path. We have committed to work with the provinces and territories to help communities provide those things for youth and people who have strayed from the path.

We are only talking about violent offenders. We are not talking about not having prevention programs. I agree with the member completely that we need to also have prevention programs that go hand in hand on both sides, not only on one side. The Conservative Party is committed to that as well.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure today that I present my reply to the Speech from the Throne. First of all, since this is my first speech in this 39th Parliament, I would like to thank the citizens of Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie. A great majority of them, over 22,000, have entrusted me with the mandate to represent them in the House. I thank them for their confidence. In the months and indeed the years ahead, I shall defend as best I can the interests of Quebec and of Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie. I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé.

I will be directing most of my attention today to the environmental aspects of the Speech from the Throne. Where the environment is concerned, the best one can say is that this throne speech is vague, soft and inadequate, particularly as regards the federal government's commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and combating climate change not only in Canada, but also in the rest of the world.

In the battle against climate change, this is a major step backward. Why? First, because there is nothing in this throne speech to clearly indicate that the federal government intends to respect Canada's commitment to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions to 6% below 1990 levels between 2008 and 2012.

Why else is this a major step backward? Because in the throne speech of October 2004, on page 12, we read that the Government of Canada will respect the commitments on climate change that it made in signing the Kyoto protocol. In October 2004, the government clearly and solemnly affirmed before this House and the people of Quebec and Canada that it intended to honour its commitment.

*The Address*

A few years later, in April 2006, there is but one small sentence about climate change and compliance. We hear that the government “will take measures to achieve tangible improvements in our environment, including reductions in pollution and greenhouse gas emissions”. As for international compliance in the campaign against climate change and the desire to reduce greenhouse gas emissions at source, it is obvious that the federal government has decided to step back from its commitments.

We on this side of the House are not surprised at this withdrawal by the federal government. Why? Because even in the days that followed the election campaign, the Prime Minister indicated to the Canadian public that he wanted to promote a new protocol on climate change, even though we already have one, the Kyoto protocol.

We have reason to be worried, today, as we see the federal government’s backhanded dismissal of the Kyoto protocol, and see it concurring with certain other countries on the international stage. I am thinking, for example, of that Asia-Pacific partnership headed by the United States and Australia, which is taking part in the action against climate change and yet setting no reduction targets or timetables.

Is this what Quebeckers expect of the federal government—to simply let things slide in dealing with this issue? The answer is no. Eighty-seven percent of Quebeckers want the Canadian government to respect its commitments on climate change. In recent weeks, in March, I went on a tour of all the regions of Quebec.

• (1140)

I visited over 13 regions. I met with representatives of regional environmental councils and citizens in each of them. They told us that they expected the Bloc Québécois and the opposition to force the Government of Canada to honour its commitments. Clearly the government has not heard what Quebeckers have to say. They expect the government to honour its commitments.

Not only is the government saying on the international scene—Canada is presiding over the Convention on Climate Change—that we will not honour international commitments made by our country but, in addition, the government is already preparing the public for a reduction in allocations to environmental organizations fighting climate change. Even before tabling the budget, the government has announced to Quebeckers and Canadians that they should expect a 40% reduction in moneys allocated to the fight against climate change.

Not only are we backpedalling with regard to international and national objectives, but we are also reducing funding provided to organizations and companies to reach our targets for greenhouse gas emission reductions.

We can see the government coming for miles. It will give the excuse that greenhouse gas emissions increased by 24% in recent years in spite of over \$4 billion in investments and that we are not going to reach our objectives. That is exactly what the Minister for the Environment said in her speech last week. It is as though the government were trying to use the failure of the Liberal’s approach to avoid honouring its own and Canada’s commitments. Or, as though the lack of or inappropriate action of the Liberal government in the

fight against climate change provided the Conservative government with a reason to not take action.

We expect this government to respect the will of Quebeckers and to clearly indicate its intentions, both within Canada and internationally. An important meeting will be held in Bonn on May 15 of this year. The Minister of the Environment will preside over the deliberations. We expect her to stand up and confirm that we will meet the objectives of the Kyoto protocol. We expect nothing less from the minister. If she refuses to demonstrate this willingness, which the government has clearly expressed, we will be left to conclude that the Canadian approach has changed significantly, giving way to a new approach in the fight against climate change. That is the danger facing us, no more and no less, in the weeks and months to come.

We must bear in mind the words used in recent weeks by the government, the Minister of the Environment and the Prime Minister. The desire to propose a new protocol, despite the existing Kyoto protocol, corresponds to the desire clearly expressed by the government to renege on its international commitments.

We would have preferred that the Speech from the Throne clearly support the existing protocol. Furthermore, we expect that government not to reduce the funding or budgets allocated to the fight against climate change in the next budget. Lastly, we expect the government to adopt a territorial approach that would allow Quebec to carry out its plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In the fight against climate change, we are hoping for a common approach adapted to each province. This will ensure improved performance in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and everyone will come out ahead. This should be the government’s preferred approach.

• (1145)

[*English*]

**Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from the Bloc for his continuous commitment to the environment and to working for the well-being of the environment. I share his concerns about the language being used by the new Minister of the Environment. There is a code being used that is very worrisome. As she dances all around the issue of Kyoto, she has never said that she will tear up the accord, but she has certainly said that the Conservatives do not see themselves to be bound by Kyoto.

I would like to ask my colleague if he agrees with me that the newly elected Conservative government should know that it was Canada that has stipulated to or is bound by Kyoto, that it has nothing to do with the Conservative Party and its policies. On behalf of the Government of Canada, we entered into the Kyoto accord. It is binding and it stipulates that we have a certain code of conduct and code of practice for the coming years.

Would he agree that there is a worrisome disconnect between the minister’s obligation as the Minister of the Environment for Canada and her own party’s reservations about the Kyoto accord?

*The Address*

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Bernard Bigras:** Mr. Speaker, the minister is trying to give two speeches. In this House, we usually hear one for the rest of Canada and another for Quebec.

Two speeches are being given on climate change. In the first, on the international stage, the government is saying that Canada has no intention of withdrawing from Kyoto. However, at home, the government says it has no intention of incorporating the objectives for reduction set out in the protocol into a future plan on climate change in Canada.

That is the problem. We are having a hard time understanding the tricks of the government, which says one thing on the international stage, but another here in the House.

We want the plan the government will be tabling to include the objectives for reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 6% between 2008 and 2012 and to set out how the government plans to achieve these objectives. Otherwise, the government will to all intents and purposes be taking the laissez-faire approach, the American approach. It will lead us inevitably to an increase in greenhouse gases.

To put it very succinctly, the speeches of my colleagues the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, the Minister of Industry and even the Minister of Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, who said as late as last week he did not believe in the objectives of the Kyoto protocol, make it abundantly clear that this government has thrown the protocol overboard.

Our intention, however, is to ensure that the government honours Canada's commitment in the coming weeks and months. It is what Canadians and Quebecers want.

• (1150)

[*English*]

**Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, what I am going to do is put to rest the big lie. The big lie was put out about the last government through this government with great success during the campaign, and the lie basically said that our government was something other than honest, hard-working and effective. We know that a small number of people stole money from the public coffers. That is well known. That is conduct. Conduct and accountability, though, are two very different things. The concern I have is that the current bill taking place right now—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. member for Nepean—Carleton.

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre:** Mr. Speaker, the member across the way is using unparliamentary language, language that is not befitting of this House, language that is not appropriate in front of an honoured Speaker such as yourself. He accused other members of the House of having told lies. That is explicitly forbidden under the Standing Orders. I would ask that you instruct the member to retract those statements.

**The Deputy Speaker:** While I appreciate the sensitivity of the hon. member for Nepean—Carleton, what I heard the hon. member say is certainly, and unfortunately, he might believe, within the realm of acceptability. The hon. member talked about collective behaviour. It is when we refer to individuals as liars that it is unparliamentary.

But perhaps the hon. member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca will want to take into account the comments of the hon. member.

**Hon. Keith Martin:** Mr. Speaker, what I was referring to was the big lie, which was the erroneous impression that was left with great success in the last election by the current government. I am going to go through some of those issues and put to rest some unfortunate misinterpretations that have been put forth by the current government.

On the issue of big donations, does the public know that it was the Liberal government that banned big donations, both personal and corporate? That has already been done and the members from the other side know that. Does the other side know, and the public knows this full well, that it was this Liberal Party that reduced taxes? It was this party. Do they also know that it was this party—

**The Deputy Speaker:** I regret to inform the hon. member that his time has expired, and a point of order with respect to relevance might have been well taken.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, to begin, I congratulate my colleague, the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, for his excellent speech on the importance to future generations of abiding by the Kyoto Protocol. In Quebec, the Kyoto Protocol is important.

I also thank my fellow citizens of Berthier—Maskinongé for placing their trust in me for a second time, in the recent election campaign. I can assure them that they will not be disappointed in their choice and that I will work hard to represent their interests.

As always, the Bloc Québécois team will never waver in its efforts to get the federal government to respond to the concerns of Quebecers. That is the mandate we have been given and that is the challenge we intend to meet.

Quebec's interests will be what guides our party at all times. But we believe that only sovereignty will genuinely enable Quebec to freely make the decisions that meet its needs and aspirations.

The Speech from the Throne gives a general picture of the government's vision of the state of Canada and gives an indication of its legislative agenda. However, as a number of my colleagues have said, the Speech from the Throne presented by the Conservative government is a very general statement, with no precise direction and no timetable, and provides few details as to its priorities, particularly those of special concern to Quebec.

Last December, in the middle of the election campaign, in his speech in the national capital of Quebec, the leader of the Conservative Party was much more specific, and created very high expectations, by stating that he was going to work to eliminate the fiscal imbalance.

The throne speech does indeed—although very briefly—address the question of the fiscal imbalance, but it does not provide details as to the government's intentions. I would even say that it is disquieting to see that the Conservative government is offering no details about timetables for resolving this important issue for Quebec.

*The Address*

The throne speech would in fact have been an excellent opportunity for the government to establish timetables. It is important to recall that the fiscal imbalance between Ottawa, Quebec and the provinces represents a dysfunction in fiscal federalism that cannot be corrected, to lasting effect, by piecemeal agreements, or solely by increasing federal cash transfers.

If the federal government wants to eliminate the fiscal imbalance in a permanent and satisfactory way, it will have to increase transfers for post-secondary education, transfer tax revenues to the provinces and give Quebec the right to withdraw, with full compensation and without conditions, from a federal program that falls within its areas of jurisdiction.

During his speech in Quebec's national capital, the Conservative leader also broached the matter of Quebec's role in the international community, notably in UNESCO. The Conservative leader then stated that Quebec could participate in UNESCO, as it does in the summit of la Francophonie. This statement may be found, moreover, in the Conservative platform.

The Speech from the Throne narrows the scope of these promises by affirming that now it is a matter of granting the Government of Quebec a role within UNESCO, while specifying that Canada must speak with one voice in the international community. That includes UNESCO. At the Francophonie Summit, Quebec speaks for itself and has a vote on certain matters. The government now seems to prefer the previous government's approach instead.

I would now like to talk about a file that concerns me a great deal, namely job losses in the manufacturing sector. Unfortunately, any issues affecting the future of the manufacturing sector were totally ignored in the Conservative government's Speech from the Throne.

For the past few years, however, our manufacturing sector has been faced with new challenges, particularly the keen competition from the emerging countries, including China and India, the rise of the Canadian dollar on the international market and the abolition of quotas in the clothing and textile sectors.

These changes have caused major negative repercussions. In Quebec, in 2005 alone, over 33,000 jobs were lost in the manufacturing sector. In Canada, 115,000 jobs were lost during the same period.

In Quebec, private investments in the manufacturing sector increased by only 0.8% in 2005, compared to 10.2% in Ontario. The federal government must therefore increase its investments in its skills development programs for workers, and create innovation and productivity assistance tools better suited to Quebec's needs.

• (1155)

The hon. member from Joliette and I recently met with representatives of the Quebec manufacturing association. They stated that the job losses we have experienced may well grow worse in the coming months and years if nothing is done. So something needs to be done soon.

In the riding of Berthier—Maskinongé, which I have the honour of representing, one major economic sector is trying to deal with Asian competition, and that is the furniture industry. We know that

China has experienced tremendous economic growth, which does not appear to be slowing down.

Just between 2000 and 2004, Quebec imports of furniture from China jumped by 389.7%, for an annual increase of nearly 50%. In 2004, 42% of Quebec's imported furniture came from China, compared to 16% in 2000.

That is huge and above all extremely fast. It is hard, in such a short space of time, to adjust to the effects of Chinese competition. These repercussions, moreover, have so far caused the loss of 2,000 jobs and the disappearance of some 15 businesses in Quebec. The furniture industry accounts for more than 35,000 jobs, most of them in Quebec, including close to 70 companies that hire some 2,300 people in the riding of Berthier—Maskinongé alone.

The furniture industry has already done a lot to improve its productivity and the quality of its products. It had to adapt to the North American Free Trade Agreement. Now that the challenge posed by NAFTA has been met, it finds itself faced with new Asian competition.

The way in which furniture manufacturers meet this new challenge will determine the future of furniture manufacturing in Quebec and Canada. Innovation and improved productivity will be essential in order for them to succeed. New investments will therefore be necessary.

That is why the Bloc Québécois has been asking the federal government to set up a program to support modernization and adjustment, not to forget the development of a marketing assistance strategy for promoting our products abroad. The Liberal government, however, did nothing in this regard.

We have recently made some specific proposals, like the one asking that the parliamentary committees on industry, foreign affairs and international trade should meet in order to work together on some long-term approaches for dealing with the problem.

I will finish by underlining two major topics that were neglected in this Speech from the Throne, that is employment insurance and agriculture. In the situation just described, it will be very important to improve the employment insurance program and establish POWA.

Although I am pleased that the amendment to the amendment that we introduced requesting the establishment of an income support program for workers, a POWA, was adopted unanimously, there is reason for concern that there was absolutely no mention in the throne speech of improvements to employment insurance.

We must ensure that comprehensive improvements, including POWA, are adopted as soon as possible. It will also be very important to finally create an independent fund, especially when we consider that the employment insurance account has already accumulated a \$1.7 billion surplus after 10 months in the last financial year. The Conservative Party promised to set up an independent fund; with the support of the Bloc Québécois, nothing is preventing it from acting quickly.

*The Address*

Insofar as agriculture is concerned, I would like to remind everyone that the Conservative government should keep its promises by doing what is necessary to mitigate the crisis in farm incomes. The Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food acknowledged that the farm income stabilization program was inadequate. Since this is the case, we expect quick assistance for farmers, especially when the federal government itself acknowledges that it has a \$10 billion surplus.

Finally, it is important to state that we will not accept any compromises in the area of supply management at the WTO negotiations.

I could mention other matters as well that were passed over or forgotten in this speech, such as social housing or the Kyoto protocol. The hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie just spoke about them. We will have an opportunity, though, to discuss these matters over the next few weeks. We are going to do a thorough analysis of the new government's proposals and we will act in accordance with what has always been our guiding principle: the best interests of Quebec.

• (1200)

[English]

**Mr. Bruce Stanton (Simcoe North, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this is my first opportunity to address the House and it is a distinct honour to stand and speak on behalf of the citizens of the great riding of Simcoe North as their representative and as a member of the government. I would like to thank the electors of Simcoe North for the confidence they have expressed in me.

Since this is my first opportunity to speak, I would like to take this opportunity to commend you, Mr. Speaker, on your appointment as Deputy Speaker.

I would also like to thank the member for Berthier—Maskinongé for his comments and to commend him on his re-election and his efforts in representing his great riding.

The agenda set out in this 39th Parliament is focused. It is about change and it is about the kind of change that Canadians voted for on January 23. It is also the kind of change that will deliver real results for ordinary hard-working Canadians.

I am encouraged by this government's renewed respect for the unique role of a strong Quebec within a united Canada. I am encouraged by this government's renewed commitment to working with our provincial and territorial partners, respecting their jurisdictions and working cooperatively to solve the problems that bring real results for all Canadians. I believe what Canadians expect from their governments at all levels is that we put an end to the petty squabbling and posturing that has too long characterized federal-provincial relations.

Would the member not agree that the efforts of this government to reduce taxes, address the fiscal imbalance, invest in safe communities and restore Canada's stature on the world stage will enable the kind of stronger economy that he is looking for in his riding of Berthier—Maskinongé, Quebec, and for the rest of Canada?

• (1205)

[Translation]

**Mr. Guy André:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question.

The throne speech would appear to indicate that the new government wants to resolve certain important issues pertaining to Quebec and other provinces, such as the fiscal imbalance.

Quebec considers it essential that the federal government respect areas of jurisdiction. Consider the \$1,200 allowance the Conservative government wants to give families, to the detriment of our day care service. In this context, it is an intrusion into the province's area of jurisdiction. Day care services, education and health are under Quebec's jurisdiction. This sort of situation calls for vigilance.

The Bloc Québécois is open to anything that will advance Quebec and will support the government's initiatives in this regard. It is in this vein that we will operate case by case and problem by problem.

[English]

**Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, even though the Speech from the Throne talked about taxes, I noticed that it did not deal with tax fairness. Nowhere in the Speech from the Throne did it talk about the tax loopholes that exist for Canadian companies that can headquarter their companies offshore, such as Canada Steamship Lines, and avoid paying Canadian taxes. These companies are tax fugitives. Corporate Canada is laughing at us. We lose \$7 billion a year. These dummy paper companies can be set up offshore and avoid paying taxes in Quebec or in Canada or wherever else they would be paying taxes.

Would my colleague care to comment on tax fugitives and the inability of the Conservatives to rein in corporate Canada?

[Translation]

**Mr. Guy André:** Mr. Speaker, in Quebec, the fiscal imbalance is assessed at \$2.5 billion. With inflation the figure could rise to \$2.9 billion.

As concerns tax havens, the situation with Canada Steamship Lines is shameful. The poor folks who have no tax havens and who pay the taxes are penalized in terms of social and educational services that would improve the quality of their lives.

The Bloc Québécois opposes all tax havens. This is an issue we should look into in this House at some point.

[English]

**Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Mississauga South.

As this is my first speech in the House in this 39th Parliament, I would like to congratulate all new members who were elected for the first time to Parliament and all those who have returned. This place can be daunting but the reward of serving our communities and our country quickly becomes evident.

*The Address*

For the new minority government, I look forward to a real and open dialogue with compromised positions being incorporated in the government's agenda.

I wish to thank the people of my constituency of Sydney—Victoria who have once again entrusted me with their confidence. I will not disappoint them. I will stand in this House and be heard on issues that are important to them.

For the hundreds of volunteers who assisted in my re-election right in the dead of winter during the campaign, their commitment and our common vision for the country truly inspired me.

Last, I want to thank my partner in many things, my wife Pam, and my family. Without their support, being in Ottawa and travelling constantly would be very hard to do.

My riding of Sydney—Victoria is home to the Sydney tar ponds, the most challenging toxic site in Canada to clean up. The tar ponds have been the focus of many studies over the years. In 2004, I am proud to say, the Liberal government committed \$280 million toward the \$400 million federal-provincial agreement to clean up these notorious tar ponds. Now the community is preparing to review the cleanup process through a full panel review of this project.

Recently a student organized symposium at Sydney Academy High School was held to gauge student concern on the tar ponds cleanup. I had the honour to be there when they were engaged in this dialogue. Sixty students from local high schools gathered at the symposium to listen to the government and also to the Tar Ponds Agency and provincial people on the cleanup proposals.

Following these presentations, the Sydney Academy environment club, which was granted intervenor status before the full panel review, will present its suggestions and concerns. This is community involvement that must continue. This cleanup must be fully supported by the government.

Recently the Minister of the Environment visited Atlantic Canada. I was disappointed that the tar ponds were not on her agenda. Also, she did not respond to questions on continued funding for this important cleanup project. Most important, the throne speech made no mention of the Sydney tar ponds cleanup. In the two previous throne speeches it was noted.

I once heard from a wise man who said, "It's not what's in the speech that you need to worry about; it's what's not in the speech". With no mention of the tar ponds in this throne speech, I am hopeful that the old saying does not apply here.

On the issue of child care, Statistics Canada tells us that over half the children under the age of five are in child care, a 12% jump in the last eight years. Many thousands of families are on the waiting lists in an attempt to get their children into child care facilities. We have 21 day care facilities in my riding alone and my office has been in contact with all of them. Many have circulated a petition that we will be presenting in the House which asks the government to honour the full \$5 billion five year child care program committed to by our government.

Where will the quality child care spaces come from? The government has no plan to build affordable child care spaces. It believes that \$100 a month and a corporate tax break will create a

national child care system in the country. I have yet to hear from one child care provider who believes that this hands off approach to building a national child care system works.

• (1210)

Let us talk about education. In order for our country to continue to grow, we must invest in our students. Education and training are the tools our students need to succeed in the future and make our country prosper. Yet there was no mention of education in the Speech from the Throne.

Recently I met with the students of Cape Breton University. They were very optimistic about our fifty-fifty platform that the Liberal Party proposed. Many were waiting to see some similar assistance offered in this Speech from the Throne. Again, they were disappointed like many other Canadians. They were left out of the Conservative agenda.

After listening to and reading the Conservative government's Speech from the Throne, I have arrived at two conclusions. First, the speech illustrates the government's disregard for addressing issues that profoundly impact Atlantic Canadians. Second, Atlantic Conservative MPs are not effectively advancing fisheries concerns affecting the region, whether it is in their caucus or in cabinet.

A large portion of the economic activity in my riding of Sydney—Victoria is dependent on the fishery industry. May I remind the House that in the last election the Conservative Party made a lot of promises for the fishery industry, including the capital gains tax relief for fishers transferring their licence, an expanded and robust Coast Guard and the implementation of custodial management on the nose and tail of the Grand Banks.

In last week's Speech from the Throne, I expected to see some mention of these promises. I did not hear them when the Governor General read the speech, so I read the document. I still cannot find any mention of these promises. They are just not there.

These issues are not only important to Atlantic Canada, but they are also important to fisheries across the country. Countless fishermen in Cape Breton and other regions expect action on this important issue, and the government has let them down in its first big test.

Let us talk about agriculture. As a former parliamentary secretary to agriculture, to international trade and being from a farm family, I understand the urgency of farmers when they were on the Hill last week for their rally. To me, agriculture is the backbone of the Canadian economy. This is why I have great difficulty understanding why the Conservative government's Speech from the Throne did not prioritize agriculture.

*The Address*

In 2005 our government, led by the hon. member for Malpeque, went across the country and had consultations with farmers and producers. From this came the report, "Empowering Canadian Farmers in the Marketplace". The report has been widely accepted among farmers in Canada. It received big praise last weekend in Alberta. My only hope is that the Conservative government will listen to the farmers and take the report's recommendations into consideration when dealing with our farm crisis.

I would also like to touch upon the WTO negotiations in Geneva. The window for negotiations becomes smaller by the day. Farmers in Canada are depending on the government to reach an appropriate agreement where all sides can benefit. As a farmer and as a member of Parliament, I ask the Minister of Agriculture and the Minister of International Trade to treat the WTO negotiations with the respect that farmers deserve.

On regional development, our country will make major shifts in its economy. I have a lot of disappointment in the government's treatment of Atlantic Canada as far as regional development is concerned. First, the province of P.E.I. has no cabinet representation. Second, the government has downgraded ACOA to a minor portfolio, led by a minister who has two departments in addition to two provinces for which he is responsible.

As the members across the floor say, the member for Central Nova is a capable man. However, it would have been wise for the Prime Minister to give an important portfolio like ACOA to a minister who could devote 100% of his time to this portfolio. ACOA and ECBC are excellent resources for the riding of Sydney—Victoria in building a stronger economy. I will continue to fight for this important development agency that is helping Cape Breton to transform its economy to equal status with the rest of Canada. I will also—

• (1215)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** We will go to comments and questions. The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence.

**Mr. Russ Hiebert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to my friend's speech. In it he made some rather disparaging remarks about our child care plan. That is quite regrettable. I want to draw to his attention some of the differences between the Conservative plan and the plan that the Liberals proposed, and then ask him a very important question at the end of my comparison.

Whereas the Conservative plan will trust parents, the Liberal plan would rely on bureaucrats and politicians. Whereas the Conservative plan includes care provided in home by relatives, neighbours, friends and child care centres, the Liberal plan would have only supported government regulated centres or day care programs. Whereas our plan will invest \$10.9 billion over five years, their plan was only proposing to invest \$6.2 billion over that same period of time. Whereas the Conservative plan will create 125,000 day care spaces, the Liberal plan would have created none. In fact, the Liberal plan would have given the money to provinces to spend on anything, not necessarily day care spaces. Finally, whereas our plan works for stay at home parents, shift workers and people in remote areas, the

Liberal plan would have only benefited those who worked a nine to five schedule.

In light of these contrasts and comparisons, will the member opposite vote against our plan and prevent the parents in his riding from benefiting from the Conservative child care program?

• (1220)

**Hon. Mark Eyking:** Mr. Speaker, as we are in a new Parliament, I would hope all members would keep their facts straight.

All members should listen to representatives of day care centres and hear what they want. They should listen to the parents and hear what they want. All the government is giving them is \$100, which will not cover the cost of day care. The Conservative government should go back to the parents and day care centres and ask them what they need. They will tell it what they need.

The program of the Conservatives does not have \$5 billion over five years. All the provincial leaders are not in agreement with their program. There have not been consultations with grassroots day care providers about the program.

The Conservatives should listen to the constituents—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** The hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley.

**Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the member for Sydney—Victoria. He referred to the report entitled, "Empowering Canadian Farmers in the Marketplace". On one hand I appreciate him raising it, but he could not have read it. Earlier on in his comments, he referred to Conservative child care plan as not being up to his standards.

The Easter report describes a child care program just like the one we announced. The member supports "Empowering Canadian Farmers", yet it endorses our child care plan. It allows the children of farmers, like the farmers in his riding, to have child care at home or choose from a number of options. As a farmer himself and a former parliamentary secretary to the minister of agriculture, I am surprised he has not read the report.

When he commented on the Sydney tar ponds, I thought he must be ashamed of the Liberals' record on the tar ponds. Yes, it was mentioned in two throne speeches, but the Liberals never did a thing about the terrible suffering and disaster caused by those tar ponds.

Would the member stand and admit that the Liberals completely failed to do anything on the Sydney tar ponds and that he has not read the empowering Canadian farm report?

**Hon. Mark Eyking:** Mr. Speaker, first, the tar ponds location is on provincial property and we have an agreement with the Tory provincial government. Therefore, let us not start pointing fingers. We have bailed out the provincial government.

*The Address*

On child care, yes, rural people need child care, but not through tax credits for corporations. That will not give rural ridings child care spaces.

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, since 1980 I have had the opportunity to run in seven federal general elections. It is a great honour to participate in the political process. It is even a greater honour to be elected to this place.

Having been successful in the last five elections, I first want to thank my family. Without the support of our families, it would be very difficult to do this. I am very pleased to say that my family has supported me in pursuing a career they know I love.

I also want to thank the constituents of Mississauga South for their support and confidence. I look forward to going to work each and every day to represent their views and their concerns.

Today we are discussing the Speech from the Throne. It is interesting to note that over the past seven Parliaments I have watched the throne speeches. They have been quite different and each has had an opportunity to lay out what the government believes is the most important messaging that it would like to get to Canadians. Regardless of the words in the throne speech, the representations of the various parties during the election campaign also are very important. They lay out what I believe to be an assessment of where we are today and what the shape of Canada is. They also try to articulate to some extent where we should be going and put forward some of the elements, the structure and skeleton of a plan which allows us to move forward in that direction.

I have often thought that the measure of success of a country is not an economic measure. It is the measure of the health and the well-being of its people. We have talked throughout this debate about a number of issues which relate to people in many circumstances. However, I first wanted to relay and share with members what I have learned as a member of Parliament over these last 12 years.

One of the first committees I went to was the health committee. We were told at that time that 75% of health care spending was spent on fixing problems and only 25% on prevention. We were also told by health officials that this model was unsustainable, and I think we have shown that that is right. Health has always been the number one priority of Canadians since I have been a parliamentarian. I believe all hon. members should put that health lens on the camera to ensure that everything we do is related to the health and well-being of all Canadians.

I also learned that there were exceptions to everything. Therefore, if we make an argument, someone will come up with one exception to try to invalidate the argument. However, as parliamentarians, we have to look at the preponderance of evidence, at the majority of cases or the general case so we can make an argument, understanding and respecting the fact that there are circumstances. There are parents who are excellent caregivers and there are some parents who are terrible caregivers. It has nothing to do with things we can control, but we have to understand there are exceptions.

Let us not dismiss the general argument, the preponderance of evidence, of what happens especially as it relates to our first priority, which I would think would be children. I have learned that we cannot legislate behaviour, but we as parliamentarians have an

opportunity to educate, inform and provide the tools so people can seek to be as good as they can be, from cradle to grave.

I have learned that in this place we need to have a bit of a philosophy. I would characterize my philosophy as a Canadian, first, as protecting the rights and the freedoms of the individual. It is a very important foundation of this place and of the work that we do. The second, which may not be shared by all, is to help first those in most need.

We know there are people within our society who have challenges, whether they be the disabled, the mentally ill, the infirmed or the aged, those who are unable to help themselves. We have a responsibility to keep their interests first in our minds, to make absolutely sure that they do not fall through the cracks.

• (1225)

If I were to characterize my work as a parliamentarian over the last 12 years, I would say that putting children first probably has been a common theme through much of the work that I have done. As members of Parliament we have an opportunity in our careers, however long they may be, to leave a mark, a fingerprint or an impression so that others who come after we are long gone will be able to build on those values systems that we brought forward.

I remember presenting petitions in this place hundreds of times which stated something like managing the family home and caring for preschool children is an honourable profession which has not been recognized for its value to our society. It is unpaid work, but it is still work and it deserves to be recognized.

As a consequence, one of the first bills that I put into this place was a private member's bill to permit income splitting between spouses, so that one could stay at home and care for preschool children. It was not to suggest that somehow we simply share an income fifty-fifty, but that we should recognize that the income of a family belongs to that family and that the tax rule should recognize that it is a good relationship and that a strong Canadian family is very important to healthy outcomes of children. We wanted to send that message.

Mothers and fathers both have an important role to play with children, yet family breakdown is probably the single largest cause of child poverty in Canada. In fact, 15% of all families in Canada are lone parent families and account for 54% of all children living in poverty. If we want to eliminate child poverty, we have to be prepared to deal with the dysfunction and the breakdown of the Canadian family. That is not a view held by all members in this place, but we should think about it because statistically that is the fact.

I wrote a number of small books on some issues. I remember in one of them I defined what I felt was real love. I described real love as being a situation where one person has put the interests of another ahead of his or her own.

*The Address*

When we think about it, for instance, when a couple in terms of having children makes a decision to have one parent withdraw from the paid labour force to care for the children, the family is losing a net paycheque. It is an expensive proposition. Their value system and belief is to put the children's interests first, because they know how important it is particularly during the first three years of life. That is when the brain is being wired. It is when children are being influenced in terms of their cognitive abilities. That is the investment the parents want to make. It is short term pain, but it is long term gain.

I was very disappointed that the OECD would characterize our current day care situation as being glorified babysitting. I am awfully afraid that any moneys we are going to throw at this has not been dedicated to anything new, but rather may be putting clean oil into the old dirty oil. We may not see better outcomes in terms of child care delivery systems.

We must be very careful in this debate. I think I understand. I certainly am a champion on behalf of families that choose to provide direct parental care. In my value system no one can provide better care, that secure, consistent attachment of an engaged, committed adult, than the mother and the father. That is my value system. It is not necessarily shared by all, but I will be here to defend it.

I also intend in this Parliament to do work again on fetal alcohol syndrome. I have told this House so many times about the linkages between criminal activity and the mental health condition called fetal alcohol syndrome or fetal alcohol spectrum disorder.

In the last Parliament we had evidence that 50% of the people in Canada's jails suffer from fetal alcohol syndrome or other alcohol related birth defects. If we want to address real crime in Canada, there is also a non-violent element. That is the problem of maternal consumption of alcohol which causes mental health in a very large percentage of our children.

I have some other priorities. I am hoping that we will look at matters to do with the aging society, the underground economy, and a prosperity agenda, because good fiscal policy makes good social policy and good social policy makes good fiscal policy.

• (1230)

**Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague for Mississauga South made some thoughtful remarks. He introduced his speech by acknowledging his family first and then the people from Mississauga South and expressed his gratitude. I share his sentiments in that regard.

I would like to ask him about something that his government failed to do, and it is still not in the Speech from the Throne. I would like to ask him his views on what is technically called tax motivated expatriation. That is a fancy phrase for a sleazy, tax cheating loophole whereby one can put a paper company offshore and avoid paying taxes in Canada, otherwise known as tax havens.

The Liberal government ignored offshore tax havens. The Liberals actually tore up 11 tax treaties with 11 different countries and left one significant tax haven where the former prime minister had 13 paper companies situated.

Would my colleague agree in the interest of tax fairness that the current government should do what his government failed to do and plug these sleazy tax cheating loopholes where corporate Canada can act as tax fugitives and avoid paying their fair share of taxes?

• (1235)

**Mr. Paul Szabo:** Mr. Speaker, I would simply say that the activity that is going on within the corporate sector is not illegal. Just like with any taxpayer, tax avoidance is necessary and tax evasion is illegal. In this case he is talking about avoidance.

**Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I must say that since I became a member here in 2004, the advice the member has given me and a lot of other young parliamentarians, perhaps from many parties but certainly within our own, has been extremely valuable. I know how seriously he takes the House. In fact, I believe in the last term of Parliament he uttered more words here in the House than any other member of Parliament.

The member also has a background in finance. I am wondering if he might discuss with us his view of one of the priorities in the Speech from the Throne which is the 1% cut in the GST, eventually possibly 2%. There are a lot of economists who think that it is bad policy. I am not an economist, but I concur. I wonder if the member with his background, education and experience in finance might shed some light on how he views the 1% cut in the GST as economic policy.

**Mr. Paul Szabo:** Mr. Speaker, members will know that the Conference Board has already given an opinion on this. It is in the papers today that the government cannot afford to extend both the cut in the GST and retain the income tax cut that was delivered to Canadians last November retroactive to January 1, 2005. Both these items cost in the range of some \$5 billion and it is not going to be economical.

I would say that there are some problems in terms of those. I understand there is a political attractiveness on the GST side, but in terms of the economic arguments, the income tax cut to Canadians is fairer because it is across the board and is driven directly to everyone. The average Canadian family would get some \$400 reduction in their income tax bill each and every year.

With regard to the GST, there are two elements. First, low income Canadians do not have spending on taxable goods which is high enough for them to generate much. In fact, most Canadians with an average income would only generate maybe a savings of \$100 in their pockets. A high income earner who bought a \$60,000 car all of a sudden would get \$600. It is progressive and is not equitable.

*The Address*

More important with regard to the GST is the impact on the productivity agenda. We are going to talk a lot about that in this place. It has to do with spurring economic growth, creating jobs and a healthy economy for Canada for a very long period of time.

**Mr. James Moore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for the Pacific Gateway and the Vancouver-Whistler Olympics, CPC):**

Mr. Speaker, I want to start my speech by thanking the constituents of Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam for the privilege of serving them for the third time as their member of Parliament. To my constituents, in my almost six years as the member of Parliament for Port Moody, Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam, Anmore and Belcarra I have never forgotten my first responsibility will always be to make decisions that are first and foremost in our community's best interest. It has been my pleasure and honour to serve my constituents and I promise to always work at the peak of my abilities to represent them.

On January 23 Canadians voted for change, for a new direction for this great country, and this Conservative government is providing the new direction Canadians were hoping for. Throughout the election campaign and through to the throne speech we have been clear and consistent about our top five priorities for this Parliament.

First, we are going to pass the federal accountability act. The federal accountability act will change the way business is done in Ottawa forever by eliminating undue influence by big money donors by banning large personal or corporate donations to political parties; by toughening the rules governing lobbying, and getting rid of the revolving door syndrome that so often was seen in the past involving political staffers, bureaucrats and lobbyists; by making the federal government more transparent and accountable by increasing the power of independent officers of Parliament such as the Auditor General; and by providing real protection to whistleblowers, both public servants and other Canadians who wish to come forward with information about unethical or illegal activities they may have seen in some area of the federal government. The idea is to give Canadians the good clean government that they expect and deserve.

The second of the five priorities is we are going to give tax relief to all Canadians by cutting the GST. It is becoming more and more expensive to live in Canada's major cities and their suburbs. There are fewer places where the rising cost of living is having a harder impact on residents than in Vancouver and its suburbs. Our plan is to leave more money in the pockets of hard-working Canadians, ordinary Canadians, so that they have a little more money left over at the end of the week to pay the bills and save for their children's education.

Key to this will be an immediate cut in the GST from 7% to 6% with the rate eventually dropping even further to 5%. Because everyone pays the GST, this cut means that every Canadian will benefit.

The member for Mississauga South said that low income Canadians would benefit from the income tax cut but would not benefit from the GST cut. He may be surprised to know, but he should not be surprised to know, that the lowest income Canadians do not pay income taxes but they do pay the GST. They get their rebate at the end of the year, but an immediate GST cut will help them more than the mythical Liberal tax cut.

It is estimated that such a cut will save families hundreds of dollars every year which they can use to pay for the necessities of life, such as food, clothing, transportation, utilities and housing. Making the government budget smaller and the family budget bigger so that all Canadians have more power, choice and influence in how they choose to live their lives is a Conservative ethic and a Canadian value that this government will act upon.

Third, we are going to help families with the cost of raising their kids and give parents more choice in child care. Canadian families face many stresses and none are more personal and important than the raising of Canada's next generation. While meeting the need to balance workplace and family responsibilities, many Canadian families are struggling and they could use some help. One way will be to give parents more choice in child care so that they can find the best way to meet their needs and those of their children.

No two families are the same, which means that the one size fits all approach pursued by the Liberals and supported by the NDP in the past just does not work. We are going to fix this. We are going to do it by providing parents with a \$1,200 annual allowance for each child under the age of six to be used to pay for the child care that best fits their situation. Be it public or private day care, a neighbour or a relative, it is their choice, whatever works best for them.

We are going to work to create more child care spaces across the country, not by complicated agreements between governments but by helping companies and organizations create thousands of child care spaces for their employees and those living in their communities.

Fourth, we are going to work with the provinces to address growing health care wait times. The throne speech makes it clear that we are going to work with the provinces and territories to establish a patient wait times guarantee. The benchmarks established by provinces and territories set maximum limits on wait times for certain medical treatments. The guarantee will ensure that if people cannot get the medical care that they need where they live in the public system within the established benchmarks, they will be able to get that care either outside the province or in a private clinic with the cost being covered by public insurance.

Universal access to a single payer health care system for all Canadians is an ethic which Canadians have time and again said they want protected. This Conservative government will defend this ethic and will work to ensure that all Canadians will have the care they need when they need it.

*The Address*

•(1240)

Fifth, we are going to get tough on crime. For my constituency, I believe the most important set of issues this Parliament will address is criminal justice reform. As a lifelong resident of my riding and as someone who has seen more bars put on windows, more youth violence than ever, more property crime than ever, drug violence growing, and a sense of frustration by every day citizens over our justice system go deeper and deeper, I believe that changes to our justice system will be the most important contribution this Parliament will make to the health of my community.

As such, I am proud that our government will make criminal justice reform one of the cornerstones of our governing agenda. The justice minister, the member for Provencher, has visited my constituency twice in the past year and has heard firsthand from mayors, city councillors, the Coquitlam RCMP and Port Moody police about the kind of justice reforms we need to ensure our community stays as one of the greatest places in the world to live. I am proud to report that both he and the Prime Minister have listened, have made a commitment, and will act on important criminal justice reforms.

Last week, in a speech to the executive board meeting and legislative conference of the Canadian Professional Police Association, the Prime Minister outlined our justice package. He pointed out that one of the things that has made Canada a great country is our traditionally low rates of crime. In fact, our peaceful, law-abiding communities are part of Canada's traditional identity and values, but times are changing and our cities are changing. The safe streets and safe neighbourhoods that Canadians have come to expect as part of our way of life are threatened by rising levels of crime. Clearly, this cannot go on.

If we are to protect our Canadian way of life we need to crack down on gun crime, gang crime and drug crime. Canadians are tired of talk. They want action and they want it now. That is what the Conservative government is going to do. We are going to take action.

First of all, we will hold criminals to account. We will set mandatory minimum sentences for serious, violent and repeat offenders. We are going to hold criminals to account. This means making sure sentences match the severity of crimes and getting violent criminals off the streets so they cannot reoffend. This government will send a strong message to criminals that if they do a serious crime, they will do serious time.

That is why during our mandate this government will take the following actions. We will introduce mandatory minimum prison sentences for drug traffickers, weapon offences, repeat offenders and crimes committed while on parole. We will end conditional sentences for serious crimes. We will repeal the faint hope clause. We will replace statutory release with earned parole. Parole will no longer be granted automatically as it often is today. Parole is a privilege and it has to be earned.

We also know that holding criminals to account will require more police. We are going to work with our partners and other levels of government to ensure there are more police officers on our streets. This is a vital element in fighting crime because many police officers are currently underfunded and feel under siege.

We are going to act. We are going to do so by establishing a new cost shared program with provincial and municipal governments to hire new police officers; by reinvesting savings from the long gun registry into front line law enforcement; and by investing new federal money into criminal justice priorities, including youth at risk programs.

When it comes to drug crimes, the government will also act by doing a number of things such as ensuring mandatory minimum prison sentences and large fines are given to marijuana grow operators and drug dealers; by introducing a national drug strategy; and by not reintroducing the Liberal government's plan to decriminalize marijuana.

We will also get tough on sex offenders. I will also continue my personal efforts to have tough laws enacted against those cowards who use date rape drugs to sexually assault, rape and abuse women. For too long this problem has been allowed to grow and I believe it is time to take action against those who use date rape drugs.

Let me finish where I began by thanking the people of Port Moody, Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam, Anmore and Belcarra for the honour of being able to stand here today and speak on their behalf in this great Parliament.

The five priorities that will be the focus of this government and Parliament this year will lead to a healthier Canada, a stronger British Columbia, and stronger tri-cities. After 13 years of dithering and delaying, this Prime Minister and this Conservative government will get things done for Canadians. Let the debates begin.

•(1245)

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Dan McTeague (Pickering—Scarborough East, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member who has just spoken on his recent election. Perhaps he is going to share his speaking time with another member, but it is really up to him to make that statement and you to allow it.

[*English*]

I want to congratulate the member on his third election to the House. I know these things tend to come fast and furiously. Three elections in five years presses most of us to be more vigilant in terms of what we are doing at home and to ensure that our efforts here are not lost.

The hon. member for Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam talked about the five areas which his government is going to, as it were, hang its hat and I have concerns with two or three of those areas, particularly the accountability act.

*The Address*

The hon. member is an extremely gifted member of Parliament. He should be acting in a capacity as minister. Yet, one of the first acts which defied this much vaunted chest thumping on the issue of accountability was the appointment of an unelected individual from the Montreal region, Michael Fortier, who happens to be the person he responds to and reports to. When it comes to the clearest form of accountability in the House of Commons, the minister is simply not here.

Indeed, that member does not have Privy Councillor status to be able to even look at cabinet documents without the advice of the hon. member who he represents, who is in the other chamber. Clearly, on that basis, with this particular member being the litmus test, the accountability question fails and it fails miserably.

The second area that he touched on which I thought was very interesting was the area of the long arm registry. He also used comments with respect to the Prime Minister's speech at the CPPA last week. I note for the record that the CPPA does in fact support the long arm registry. I would ask the hon. member in his answer if he could clarify how he is going to find money for front line officers, which I think we all agree should be done at some point, especially through the provinces, where funding will not be obtainable as a result of the fact that the long arm registry must be maintained in accordance with CPPA?

• (1250)

**Mr. James Moore:** Mr. Speaker, on the element of accountability, I want to ensure that the House knows that I will be splitting my time with my colleague from Saskatoon—Humboldt.

The member raises two issues. First, the issue of Michael Fortier being the Minister of Public Works and second, the gun registry. The Prime Minister made the determination that the city of Montreal should be represented in this federal government and he did so by appointing Michael Fortier. If the hon. member or any member in the House does not believe that Canada's second largest city should be represented at the cabinet table, they should rise on their feet and say so, but I do not think any member in the House will do that.

In fact, there is an element of accountability. I do not know if the members opposite know, but this building is cut in two. The western side of this building is the House of Commons. The eastern side of this building is the Senate. In the Senate side, there is a question period, there is an opportunity for accountability on the record for Michael Fortier as the Minister of Public Works to be available to over 70 Liberal Senators to ask questions.

By the way, for the Liberal member, in Canadian history there have been 86 people appointed to cabinet who have not been elected members of Parliament. One of them is one of the frontrunners for the Liberal leadership, a man by the name of Stéphane Dion, who the hon. member might consider running for the leadership. This is a precedent that has history.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** Order, please. The hon. parliamentary secretary knows and I have repeated in the House that you do not name other members of the House. Consider yourself admonished, sir. I would like to resume comments and questions, and I recognize the hon. member for Winnipeg North.

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary wants to ensure that his government

puts in place good public policy. I want to raise with him the potential for his government to do the opposite, to engineer, institute, and implement public policies that will actually have a greater benefit for the well-to-do in our society than those who are struggling day by day to make a living and pay their taxes.

I raise two particular issues and studies, and I would like the member to comment on them. One of them is by, and he may know this, the Caledon Institute which points out clearly that, as proposed, the family allowance of \$1,200 per child under the age of six will actually provide a greater benefit for wealthier families who have the luxury of being—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** Please wrap up the question because there is no more time. The parliamentary secretary will have to be really quick.

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis:** Mr. Speaker, let me just simply cite the Caledon Institute study which shows that the child allowance gives a greater benefit to the wealthy than those at the other end and the recent CCPA study which shows that the proposed GST cut by the Conservatives does the same. Will the member ensure that policies that his government implements do not have that kind of regressive impact on our society today?

**Mr. James Moore:** Mr. Speaker, I would be glad to read the study that the hon. member has presented to this House. I can assure her, all members, and all Canadians, that our plan will provide more money to Canadian families than the Liberal plan did and the NDP never would because of course the NDP are not going to form the government in this country. Our plan will deliver for Canadian families. I appreciate the comments and I look forward, as I said at the end of my speech, to the debates. I know the hon. member believes passionately in these issues and I look forward to her contribution.

• (1255)

**Mr. Bradley Trost (Saskatoon—Humboldt, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this is the first time I have risen in this Parliament to give a speech. I have made some remarks, and questions and comments. As this is the first time, I want to thank my constituents back in Saskatoon—Humboldt for re-electing me to this chamber. When I was elected the first time, I received one of the more narrow margins in Canadian political history and one of the more unique circumstances.

I want to thank the people of Saskatoon—Humboldt, from Quill Lake to Saskatoon, up to St. Louis and St. Brieux, and all the towns in between, for re-electing me with one of the largest margins in the history of my region; a margin which, in percentage terms, was not exceeded since 1945, according to my research. So, I really appreciate the faith my constituents have in me. For the 50% of the constituency who did not vote for me, I will be there to represent them, not just the people who voted for me. I am the member for the entirety and will seek to serve everyone.

In speaking to the government's Speech from the Throne, the government emphasized and stated five key priorities. Five priorities, though, do not mean that other issues will be ignored. We noted, toward the end of the speech, a strong statement on agriculture.

*The Address*

As we emphasize in this debate the five priorities of the government, we will note that the government will take action on things that are key; things that may not be key to all parts of this country but are key to areas such as agriculture, which is important to my home province of Saskatchewan.

One of the five major priorities of the government is the accountability act, an act to bring trust, respect, and a certain degree of honesty and integrity into the public system, into the political system, one that should be there innately without any need for legislation and it is amazing that we even need to have legislation.

A second priority is child care, an attempt to emphasize to help all Canadian families. If I may say, it is child care not day care that the government is emphasizing. Frequently, a mixture of statistics have been quoted in this House stating that the majority of Canadian children are in child care, and then not noting that only about a third of those listed in child care are really in day care. All options, be it with day care, stay at home mothers, relatives, friends, or neighbours babysitting, need to be looked at because parents want what is best for their children.

The health care wait times guarantee is something which I am sure will be the feature of many debates in this House.

The cut to the GST is something that was also noted.

However, I especially want to emphasize today the government's priority on cracking down on crime, on making a very strong statement that law and order is important to this country.

I am particularly pleased to support the Speech from the Throne and the emphasis on criminal deterrence for several reasons, one of which is the importance to my constituency, the people I represent here in the House of Commons.

In my first term, I did quite an extensive survey, spread out evenly throughout my riding, and contacted 10,000 different households. One of the issues that we questioned the constituents on to ascertain their views, and again this was not a send-out self-response survey where we only get the actively interested but a scientifically spread out one, was on crime and criminal punishment.

Approximately 92% of my constituents said, in response to the questions, they thought that the criminal element in our society was being treated too leniently; they were being caught and they were being released. It is very important to me to see that the government is representing my constituents in the Speech from the Throne.

A second reason I am very pleased with the government's emphasis on justice issues in this Speech from the Throne is my conversation with police officers during the campaign in Saskatoon—Humboldt, both this one and previously. I particularly remember when I was door knocking in the region of Silver Springs in the Saskatoon portion of my riding.

I came to the door of one couple's house in the middle of a Saturday afternoon and began to visit with the gentleman. He had a considerable number of questions about the criminal justice system. It turns out he was a long term veteran of the Saskatoon police force. He said that the situation was terrible. He said that we arrest someone and before we are done the paperwork, they are back out on the streets.

● (1300)

It is highly inappropriate that we spend more time in being concerned about criminals being looked after than we do in defending our society. It was a concern which he wanted emphasized in the House. I am sure that if he is watching or following the news, he will be quite pleased that the government has taken this action.

Another reason is that it is appropriate for the government to be involved in the enforcement of law, the enforcement of justice. I am noted for being even a conservatives' Conservative and am not always so pleased with some of the more redistributive elements, shall we say, of economic packages that tend to go out, that tend to be a large element of our political discourse. But the government has an appropriate force to use, and that is in the enforcement of the rule of law and the enforcement of justice.

What is law? As French economist Frederick Bastiat said:

What, then, is law? It is the collective organization of the individual right to lawful defense. Each of us has a natural right—from God—to defend his person, his liberty, and his property.

It is the government, through action, through the arms of the state, that does have a legitimate right and duty to enforce that law, so I am proud to say that my government is actually doing something that government should be doing and is not interfering in the many political shenanigans we have seen previous governments engage in.

The government's overall approach has been based on principles of justice. What are those principles of justice as I understand them, speaking as the member for Saskatoon—Humboldt?

One of the principles is deterrence. We need to make sure that when we have a justice system, there is a deterrent, so that when a criminal weighs the decision to commit a crime—and admittedly, not all of them do it on a rational basis—he will understand the consequences.

The punishment must also be appropriate to the offence. It should not merely be a slap on the wrist for something serious. It has to be balanced between what is insubstantive and what is substantive.

Justice also has to say something about the valuation of society. One of the things that most disappointed me about the legislation of previous governments was in issues dealing with the protection of children from sexual exploitation. By not taking a firm enough stand on these issues, previous administrations have said that they do not value the protection of children enough. That is a concern I had previously and I know that it will be dealt with again in this House.

There is, of course, protection. When a criminal does something, we put him away not just for the deterrence, not just because society is making a statement about values, but for protection. Some criminals, sadly enough, are beyond the point of redemption. There are times when it is necessary to lock them up and throw away the key. It is a sad instance for any human being or any life, but for the protection of all of society, it is necessary.

*The Address*

What are some of the applications the government will be making to enforce its justice policy and to make it a practical application for Canadian society? One of the things we will be doing is imposing mandatory minimum sentences to state that there are certain bottom lines that need to be raised for punishment. When we commit a crime, when we take someone's life, when we damage someone's freedom, when we threaten society, and when we create an atmosphere of fear, there is a certain minimum punishment that is necessary to provide those principles of justice that I spoke of earlier. That is one practical aspect the government will be doing.

The other practical aspect will be providing resources. Resources are needed in our society to help provide the elements for the forces of law enforcement to do their job. Particularly, we will provide support to police and to the RCMP, who have had problems in always getting the resources they need. These are some of the very practical elements. They will affect my constituency, because I have spoken in the House before about the need for funding for the RCMP.

To state it again, as the member for Saskatoon—Humboldt I will be quite proud to support the Speech from the Throne. It has dealt with five major themes while still noting other themes that will be taken care of by the government, but it has put as one of its primary emphases the defence of justice, the protection of the innocent. That is something which every government should make a primary priority. It is something that we, as members of the House, should be proud to support.

● (1305)

**Hon. Shawn Murphy (Charlottetown, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there is one issue I want to pursue with the hon. member, an issue that does disappoint me, and that is the absence in the throne speech of any reference to productivity or prosperity. We have made gains over the last number of years, but I still consider us substantially behind the United States vis-à-vis our level of productivity.

One thing we look for is measures that encourage people to work, to invest and to save. Some of those issues are training, investment, education, fiscal policy, and infrastructure.

As for a few of the initiatives in the throne speech, such as the child care initiative and the lack of institutionalized formal child care, the fiscal policy of going with the reduction of the consumption tax and the raising of personal income taxes, especially for the lower and middle income people, it seems to me, and I hope I am wrong, that we may be back on a trend we were on 13 years ago, when the Conservatives were in power. The deficit was \$43 billion, interest rates were at 12%, the unemployment rate was at 11% and the whole country was one total economic basket case.

Does the hon. member across the way share my fear that we may be on the very same track we were several years ago?

**Mr. Bradley Trost:** Mr. Speaker, in the hon. member's preamble he began to discuss the importance of productivity. He noted that it was not elaborated on in the throne speech in quite the way he wanted. Partially that is because this is a focused government that will state what it will do, get its accomplishments and move on rather than making grandiose statements and not actually fulfilling them.

Having been a member of the industry committee in the previous Parliament, I will make note of things we could have done and things that I as the member for Saskatoon—Humboldt will be lobbying for to be put on the public agenda to help increase productivity.

I will note specifically the implementation of smart regulations. While the previous government made remarks, had reports and made some grandiose noise, it never actually got around to accomplishing anything. That is one of the areas where I think this government will be doing, through committees and other elements, not just its five priorities, but it will be moving things forward on productivity.

The hon. member has concerns about sliding back into a recession and having difficulties. I think he would agree with me that one of the great successes of the last couple of decades has been monetary policy. Not just in Canada but across North America, Australia and Europe, we have gone away from a world view of a more Keynesian, loose money type of concept to a much more solid, fiscally responsible monetary policy. Margaret Thatcher, the prime minister of Great Britain in 1979, was probably the politician who most brought it forward. Ludwig Erhard and some of the early German post-war finance ministers also held to that position.

I point out to the hon. member that if the interest rates had not declined and had been at the same rates as they were in the Mulroney era in the following government's era, there would still be a deficit and the government would not have balanced the budget once. In essence, the reason we had this good prosperity is largely due to proper monetary policy, and the previous government's fiscal policy was irrelevant.

**Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, very briefly, the throne speech of the government of my hon. colleague from Saskatoon—Humboldt talked about tax cuts but did not get into tax fairness. Some of us feel that the Canadian tax system is rigged like some shady ring toss on a carnival midway and that there are tax haven loopholes that corporate Canada can exploit to the tune of \$7 billion a year.

Will he agree with me that the Liberal government should have plugged these offshore tax haven loopholes? Will he work with me to make sure that his government does put an end to these offshore tax haven loopholes?

● (1310)

**Mr. Bradley Trost:** Mr. Speaker, I will tell the hon. member that I have never met a tax I particularly liked. I have never met a tax that was particularly fair. If the hon. member is prepared to work with members of other parties, I will do what I can to help push forward an agenda of tax fairness, of tax cuts across the board in all areas, in all ways.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, congratulations on your appointment as Acting Speaker of the House.

At the outset, I would like to say that I will be splitting my time with the member for Egmont.

*The Address*

In accordance with tradition—and a laudable tradition it is—I will begin by thanking the constituents of Ottawa—Vanier for giving me a fifth term as the representative for this lovely riding. I believe most of you go through my riding every morning and evening, and many of you visit it regularly, perhaps without even knowing you do.

This riding is located just east of the Rideau Canal. Located within it are the residences of the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and the Governor General, and institutions such as the National Gallery of Canada and the National Research Council Canada. With all due respect to 24 Sussex, the NRC is probably the most important institution or address in the riding.

I am therefore very proud and very grateful to the constituents of Ottawa—Vanier for renewing my mandate. I will try to continue representing them well. I will concentrate on certain priorities, including the redevelopment of the Rockcliffe military base, which is probably the most important key issue for the riding and the eastern part of the region.

Like my Liberal colleagues, I must get used to sitting on this side of the House and intend to be here regularly. I have also been given new responsibilities as official opposition critic for heritage, which I gladly accepted.

[*English*]

I have gladly accepted these new responsibilities as heritage critic. I will focus most of my remarks on that, but not exclusively, however.

[*Translation*]

In the weeks leading up to the opening of this 39th Parliament I had the opportunity to engage in consultations to establish certain priorities, what we would encourage the government to focus on in terms of heritage. I did not finish this consultation, but I did have the chance to meet with a number of groups and I must say, there was not much in the Speech from the Throne. That is what we are talking about.

In the Speech from the Throne, except for what our Governor General said about linguistic duality and this country's artists, there is nothing in what the government itself prepared. This is very disconcerting especially since last Thursday the minister, in response to a question I asked in the House, said that neither she nor her government intends to respect any commitment of the previous government. This is quite worrisome to the cultural community of this country.

Does that mean, for example, it will not honour the commitment we made to double the funding to the Canada Council for the Arts by 2008, for an annual increase of \$50 million in order to bring this funding from some \$151 million to \$301 million? This would essentially double from \$5 to \$10 the contribution, direct or indirect, of every Canadian through their taxes for arts and culture in the country. This commitment was the result of a two-year or more consultation with the entire cultural community in the country, whose support was unanimous.

Now we are being told that the government has no intention of respecting the commitments of the previous government. This commitment, by the way, was not limited to doubling the budget for

the Council for the Arts; it included other highly interesting aspects that were highly appreciated by the artistic and cultural community in terms of training and promoting our cultural products and artistic achievements abroad.

We do not know where we stand on this. We hope that in the assessments and in the upcoming budget we will get other indications than those we have received so far.

• (1315)

[*English*]

Another priority that we have identified, which touches on some of what the government has said, particularly the Minister of Canadian Heritage, is the CBC. The government has said that it intends to review the mandate of CBC Radio-Canada. The government has that prerogative and we do not question that. If it wishes to have a review of the mandate of the CBC it will proceed. However in so doing we advise caution. As some people will recall, we had the Clifford Lincoln report of the heritage committee where there was a dissenting opinion signed by the gentleman who is now the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, where, by and large, what was recommended or contemplated was the privatization of the CBC English television. That was very disquieting.

One would hope that if the government proceeds with the review of the mandate of the CBC, it would also include in that review a request to look at the funding formulas because if the mandate is reviewed then the funding to execute that mandate should also be considered and implemented. Finally, on that front, we would hope that any review of CBC Radio-Canada's mandate would be an open and a vast consultation with Canadians who want to see the country continue supporting a public broadcaster of the quality of CBC Radio-Canada in all of its manifestations.

[*Translation*]

We therefore advise caution on this issue.

Lastly, during this first session of the 39th Parliament, in the spring or the fall, we invite the government to introduce a bill to update the Copyright Act. Copyright is a very complex and controversial issue. I know something about it because I took part in the deliberations on Bill C-32. We succeeded in modernizing the Copyright Act somewhat, but much remained to be done.

Technology is evolving so rapidly that the act is falling further and further behind the times. In addition, the act must reflect our international commitments under the international conventions our country has ratified.

We encourage the government to take action on this, and we will work with the government, because we think it is important that the Copyright Act be brought up to date again.

*The Address*

[English]

The heritage portfolio, which is a vast, complex and quite fascinating portfolio, contains other important files and dossiers. I will mention the renaissance initiative in Toronto where the Art Gallery of Ontario, the ROM, the Gardiner Museum of Ceramic Art, the National Ballet School, the Royal Conservatory and the Canadian Opera Company are looking to the government to match the Government of Ontario's top up of \$49 million to their expansion project. I would encourage the federal government in its budget to match the Government of Ontario's contribution which was announced just a couple of weeks ago.

[Translation]

In Montreal there will certainly be files of interest, including the upcoming cultural summit, the theatre district and the film festival. We will invite the governments of Canada and Quebec to work together to resolve the film festival problem so that Montreal can proudly take its place again on the film festival circuit.

[English]

More locally, we certainly will encourage the government to maintain its support of national institutions and to focus on two local important initiatives which are the Great Canadian Theatre Company and the chamber music concert hall project.

[Translation]

I have just one minute left, so I will simply add that arts and culture, for which the Department of Canadian Heritage is responsible, are vital to Canadians' quality of life. Often, we ignore the commercial aspect, which is also important. On behalf of the official opposition, I would like to encourage the government not to ignore the cultural and artistic side of our lives: drama, performing arts, visual arts and literature. The Government of Canada has a role to play, and we invite it to play that role.

I would like to close by congratulating the creators of the film *C. R.A.Z.Y.* and Robert Lepage for his *Projet Andersen*.

• (1320)

[English]

I want to congratulate that gentleman, who is a native of London, Ontario, for being the first to win back to back Oscars for writing the script for the best film of the year.

**Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, although the figures vary, offshore tax havens cost Canadians between \$7 billion to \$15 billion a year. This is what they call tax motivated expatriation, which is really a polite way of saying sleazy, tax cheating loopholes.

The Liberal government failed to plug those offshore tax haven loopholes. I am not sure why. I know the Liberals tore up 11 tax treaties with various countries, these tax havens, and left one where Canada Steamship Lines happens to have 13 paper dummy companies that it funnels all its Canadian earnings through so it does not have to pay Canadian taxes.

Does my colleague agree that there should be rules put in place whereby the federal government does not do any business with nor will award any contracts to or purchase things from a tax haven

sheltered company? A company that deliberately avoids paying its taxes in Canada should not get any business from the Canadian government.

[Translation]

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member opposite—I say opposite because he seems entirely linked to the government—must understand that a change has taken place in this House and that we now form the official opposition. If he has questions about government initiatives, he should direct them to government members.

I will use the time I have left to address another very worrisome aspect of the throne speech, concerning the linguistic duality of this country. The government's wishes to cancel established agreements with all of the provinces on the subject of child care is a major concern to official language minority communities, particularly francophone communities.

When those agreements were signed, the previous government had agreed with the provinces in question that each agreement would include language clauses so such communities everywhere could benefit from a budget envelope to create child care spaces.

Cancelling those agreements forces these communities to start over from scratch. All of the actual and potential gains made possible, thanks to the language clauses in those agreements, will be lost. The government opposite does not appear concerned about it.

I am deeply concerned for francophone communities everywhere in the country. I hope that the government, in its wisdom—which is not entirely apparent—will find a way to remedy the shortfalls facing these communities.

[English]

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my question is in relation to the francophone communities and perhaps the work that might be lost.

The great thing about our approach to child care is the fact that it is fair right across the board. Our child care plan provides a benefit of \$1,200 to French communities, to aboriginal communities and in fact all ethnic communities and all Canadians. Anyone with a child under the age of six will receive this benefit. Everyone is treated fairly.

In relation to the hon. member's previous statement about film festivals, the Montreal situation was raised. The federal accountability act will provide the Auditor General with the ability to provide some insight into financing scenarios within the cultural sector. We are very hopeful that this act will provide some clarity and some transparency in all sectors.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Mr. Speaker, to try to link the accountability act to absolutely everything is an interesting proposition. I do not think we need to even go that far, assuming that one could go that far, because we are not talking about the need to link accountability and the Auditor General.

*The Address*

For instance, I believe the minister has had a report on this matter for three weeks now and nothing has happened. There is a need for both the Government of Quebec and the Government of Canada, through their appropriate ministers, to get on the same page to ensure the city has a great festival, which obviously it can have because it did, but there have been some difficulties in recent years. Through our respective agencies, SODEC or Telefilm, we have the means to ensure that gets straightened out. It takes a little leadership from the government to do that.

• (1325)

**Hon. Joe McGuire (Egmont, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in a democracy, the greatest gift people can bestow on a fellow citizen is that of being their representative in their government. I am pleased and humbled that the people of the riding of Egmont have chosen me six times for that honour.

One of the four ridings in P.E.I., Egmont encompasses the western part of Prince Edward Island from the city of Summerside to North Cape. It includes the city of Summerside, the main Acadian areas of P.E.I., the Evangeline area, St. Edward-St. Louis, numerous fishing villages and farming communities, the Lennox Island First Nation, the home of P.E.I.'s fledgling aerospace industry in Slemmon Park and the wind power facility in North Cape.

I want to thank the people of Egmont for their continued trust and support.

I also want to, during this Easter season, commend our troops in Afghanistan for their services to Canada and to that unfortunate country. I wish them and their families here at home a happy Easter to all. We are proud of all of them.

In the last Parliament I was privileged to be the minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency. I would like to thank the prime minister of the Liberal government and all those who supported me in my role as minister.

I had the opportunity to work with many of the individuals, businesses, non-profit organizations and governments. I believe together we accomplished a lot. Most notably, we were able to secure a \$708 million package for Atlantic Canada that will continue to foster economic development in our region over the next few years.

We have a \$300 million Atlantic innovation fund, the R and D arm of ACOA, which was put in place in the year 2000 by the Liberal government and was continued in the last Liberal budget and which I see the present minister having a great deal of pleasure with these days in making announcements through Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island.

We also had a \$175 million innovation fund, the innovative communities fund, which is designed for rural communities and for community development.

ACOA plays an important and vital role in the economic development of Atlantic Canada. The men and women who work at the federal agency should be proud of their accomplishments. Their goal to help our region prosper is a noble one and I applaud their efforts. I was proud to be their minister and I wish them and all of their partners extended success.

Atlantic Canada must continue to strive to get its share of national investment in the area. It still has not reached that point yet and we still have a lot of work to do.

I would now like to touch on two key issues in my reply to the Speech from the Throne, that of fiscal responsibility and strong families. I would like to quote page 3 of the throne speech which states:

Through hard work, foresight and good fortune, we have come together to make our vast country one of the most successful the world has ever seen.

The distance we have travelled is remarkable. A country once perceived to be at the edge of the world is now at the leading edge of science, business, the arts and sport. Whether it is on the podium in Turin, on the rugged hills of Afghanistan, or in the bustling markets of Asia, Canadians demonstrate time and time again that they are leaders.

The Government is proud of what Canadians have accomplished so far, and is inspired by the country's bright prospects.

That is the true legacy left by the Chrétien-Martin governments over the past 13 years.

First I would like to comment on the issue of fiscal responsibility—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** The hon. member is experienced in this House and probably will know the rules better than the man who sits in the Chair now. I would like to remind the hon. member and all hon. members that we do not name sitting members by name but by the names of their constituencies. Earlier this morning I admonished a member of the government side. It also is a matter for the members of the opposition.

• (1330)

**Hon. Joe McGuire:** Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to comment on the issue of fiscal responsibility. I am pleased to hear the government claim that it will follow the lead of our previous Liberal government. The Liberal government showed tremendous leadership by tackling and overcoming our nation's debilitating annual deficits.

As a result of the leadership demonstrated by the Liberal government, our federal government and our country has been able to boast of eight consecutive balanced budgets and has set the groundwork for our nation's books to remain positive. We will watch, with interest, to see that the government keeps its promise and maintains the positive legacy of the Liberal government, a legacy of strong fiscal and social management. The key to a prosperous nation is having one's fiscal house in order.

Our Liberal government was able to maintain strong growth by building on economic achievements, including, as I mentioned, eight consecutive balanced budgets, over \$60 billion paid off on the national debt and more than \$150 billion in tax savings. Our country is flourishing as a result of strong fiscal management. The national unemployment rate has gone from 11.2% in 1993 to 6.6% this past October, the lowest rate in 30 years. In 2004 we had the fastest growth in exports in more than seven years. Between January 2003 and October 2005, 650,000 new jobs were created, nearly all of which were full time. That is millions of jobs over the past 13 years.

*The Address*

Once our Liberal government accomplished the feat of balancing the books, we were able to invest in important priorities to Canadians. We were able to invest heavily in health care, in our children, in research and development and in the environment.

We made investments that encouraged growth in a knowledge-based economy and led to further job creation. Investments such as the Wind Interpretive Centre and the National Wind Institute in P.E.I. are two examples. These two facilities have put my home province of Prince Edward Island in the forefront of wind power generation. These positive investments have already captured national and international attention from those interested in the development of environmentally friendly, renewable energy sources. The knowledge garnered at these facilities is being shared across the country and will lead to further developments in wind power, creating new jobs and renewable energy sources that will help fuel a growing nation.

A prosperous nation, with a federal government that abides by the rule of balancing the books and paying off the national debt, is able to make investments, the kind of investments that make our country the envy of nations.

I believe one of the strongest investments we can make is by investing in strong families. Our future is our young people. Our Liberal Party has been very vocal and active in supporting families. I am proud that our Liberal government created the national child benefit, a program touted as being the most significant national social program since medicare. Payments under the national child benefit are projected to reach \$10 billion annually by 2007-08 by which time the maximum benefit for a two-child family will be \$6,259 per year. About 40% of Canadian families with children benefit from this important program.

Our Liberal government also brought in the Canada child tax benefit supplement, which provides an additional benefit for families caring for children under the age of seven at home. The benefit currently provides \$243 per year for each child, and last year it helped support 2.4 million children. This supplement is on top of the Canada child tax benefit which is providing a tax free monthly payment to help low and middle income families with the cost of raising children. About 80% of Canadian families benefit from the CCTB.

I believe the principle of strong families is also a Liberal legacy that I hope, and I believe Canadians hope, to see the Conservative government maintain.

One of our greatest achievements as a Liberal government in the last Parliament was the establishment of a brand new social program. We marked an historic milestone when we were able to get a consensus with all provinces to establish the framework for a national, affordable, quality early learning and child care program. Affordable child care is something Canadians want. Once we had our fiscal house in order, we worked with our provincial partners and together we can be proud of what we achieved.

● (1335)

My fear, however, is that the Conservative government will undo all that has been accomplished. The Conservatives appear to have no intention of abiding by the agreement that was signed by all our provincial partners. Instead, the Conservative government feels that

providing parents with \$100 a month is better. How does \$5 a day help with the cost of child care?

The tidbit about encouraging others to create child care spaces is not the kind of leadership Canadians want. The federal Liberal government showed leadership by working with the provinces to get the commitment to create quality child care spaces.

I urge the Conservative government to rethink its position and support our families and our children by living up to an agreement, by expanding it, not contracting it, an agreement which all our provincial partners agreed to in the last number of years.

**Mr. Barry Devolin (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with some interest as my Liberal colleague talked about the Liberal day care plan. My recollection of history is a little different. I remember that in 1993 the Liberals promised a national child care program. In 1997 the Liberals promised a national child care program. In 2000 they promised a national child care program. In 2004 they promised a national child care program. After the 2004 election, with some fanfare, the member who became social development minister took this on, and many people in Canada thought that this promise, after 11 years and four elections, might actually be kept.

I happened to sit on the committee of human resources, skills development and social development in the last election. We also anticipated that the government would bring forward legislation to create a national child care program. That did not happen.

The reality is that today there is no national child care program in Canada. The previous government did not create a program. The last government made an allocation of \$5 billion over five years, roughly \$1 billion a year. With great fanfare during the recent campaign, it increased that to \$10 billion over 10 years, which still sounds a whole lot like \$1 billion a year. It could have said \$20 billion over 20 years or \$50 billion over 50 years, but it said \$10 billion over 10 years, which is essentially the same thing.

There is no national child care program. The previous government never passed a program. What the minister did was negotiate a series of bilateral deals with provinces to give them money.

Why does my hon. colleague perpetuate the myth that in 13 years the Liberal government created a national child care program when it never did? There is none today. How does he answer to people who wanted that, but it was never delivered? How does he sit here today browbeating this government, saying we are going to cancel something that does not exist?

*The Address*

**Hon. Joe McGuire:** Mr. Speaker, in 1993 we promised a national child care program, but we first had to deal with the \$43 billion deficit left by the Mulroney government. After the deficit was slain and we started paying down the debt to bring us back from the precipice of fiscal disaster, we were able then to reinvest the savings we accumulated because of the hard decisions that we made in the first two terms of our government.

We started by reintroducing the money for the medicare program and many other social and economic development programs that we needed to build the country. As I quoted from the Speech from the Throne a few minutes ago, we are leaving our country in tremendous shape. We also had negotiated agreements with each of the provincial governments for a national day care program. That is a fact. It was budgeted and it was in our last budget. The commitment was there and it was made in 2004.

Because the Conservatives believe they have a better way, they are going to scrap those negotiations with Conservative, NDP and Liberal governments across the country. That commitment was made by all the provinces. Now we are going to disenfranchise a lot of the people and organizations counting on this federal money to set up a truly national program. It is not going to happen because the government is not going to let it happen.

• (1340)

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, according to the member from P.E.I., the world is wonderful, but some farmers, fishermen, forestry workers and shipyard workers would beg to differ.

Will he assist the NDP and the Bloc to push the Conservative government to move forward the shipbuilding policy, which has been sitting on the desk of the industry minister since April 2001?

**Hon. Joe McGuire:** Mr. Speaker, it is an issue that deserves the support of all members of the House on either side of the House.

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as one of the many newly elected members of the House, I want to begin by expressing my sincere thanks to the great people of Parry Sound—Muskoka who put their trust and faith in me to represent them in this new government. I am honoured to serve the 85,000 people in my riding who live in one of the most beautiful areas of Canada, 15,000 square kilometres stretching from Georgian Bay in the west to Algonquin Park in the east and from the French River in the north to almost the tip of Lake Simcoe to the south.

The riding brings together people from all walks of life who share a love of spectacular nature and the abundant number of lakes and rivers throughout the area. The numerous towns and villages in the Parry Sound—Muskoka riding are home to many families that have been there for generations and other families that have only discovered what the area has to offer.

It includes the notable communities of Bala and Baysville, Bracebridge, Burk's Falls, Dorset, Dwight, Gravenhurst, Emsdale, Honey Harbour, Huntsville, Kearney, Loring, MacTier, Magnetawan, Muskoka Lakes, Parry Sound, Pointe au Baril, Port Carling, Port Severn, Restoule, Rosseau, South River, Sundridge, Utterson and Windermere, to name a few. In addition to many other small

towns and villages, it also includes my own home of Port Sydney on beautiful Mary Lake.

These communities are often referred as cottage country by visitors and residents alike and for over 130 years Parry Sound—Muskoka, has been a tourist destination.

However, it goes beyond cottage and outdoor recreation life and includes many industries that provide local employment and contribute to the national economy. These include: Fenner Dunlop in Bracebridge, which is a large employer for manufacturing industrial conveyor systems for worldwide distribution; Algonquin Industries in Huntsville, an auto parts manufacturer with branches in Gravenhurst and Bracebridge; Marshall Well Drilling in Sundridge, a long time family-owned and operated well drilling business; Shaw-Almex in Parry Sound, a locally owned and operated plant for splicing, repairing and manufacturing conveyor belts; Found Aircraft in Parry Sound, which is the manufacturer of the famous Bush Hawk-XP, one of the toughest, most versatile aircraft built today and named one of Canada's top 100 innovative companies by NRC and Industry Canada; and Muskoka Wharf development in Gravenhurst, a multi-million dollar joint venture to revitalize the Gravenhurst waterfront including residential, commercial usages in green space. These are just a fraction of the prosperous companies situated in my riding.

There are also nine first nations communities in the riding and they add to the mosaic of diversity found in Parry Sound—Muskoka

The riding of Parry Sound—Muskoka and the wonderful people whom I now know so well can feel confident in voting for change. I will always represent their interests, both in the House and in the riding, and I thank them again for the trust they have placed in me.

I also wish to thank my family, my wife, Lynne, my children, Alex, Max and Elexa, and my parents, Carol and John, for their patience and support through thick and thin. With family ties to Cyprus and the Middle East and having immigrated to Canada as a four-year-old, they have all helped me realize my dream of service to higher goals and community.

[*Translation*]

The options were clear to Canadians who voted last January. The citizens made their choice. Now they expect our government and the House of Commons to tackle the important issues.

• (1345)

[*English*]

That is why this government is moving quickly on its commitments as outlined in the Speech from the Throne. It is centred on the five priorities that the Prime Minister set out during the election campaign, five priorities that have been our focus since forming a government.

*The Address*

As health minister, along with my colleague the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, one of our primary responsibilities is to ensure that Canadians receive the health care they need and deserve. Too often Canadians find themselves waiting too long for critical procedures with no alternative but to wait even longer, often in pain and discomfort and at some risk to their health. They want and deserve certainty that they will receive the care, what they need when they need it, wherever they live and regardless of the ability to pay.

We made a commitment to improve the quality of health care in this country and we will honour that commitment to Canadians. As mentioned in the Speech from the Throne, we will work with provincial and territorial governments to develop and implement a patient wait times guarantee for medically necessary services. We will ensure that all Canadians receive medically necessary treatments within clinically acceptable wait times.

[Translation]

The wait times guarantee will allow us to reach two important objectives. First, patients will have an idea of when they will receive care and will know what to do if wait times become excessive. Second, accountability is built into this guarantee so that patients will receive the treatment needed within an acceptable timeframe.

[English]

Since becoming the Minister of Health, I have discussed wait times with my provincial and territorial colleagues, health care representatives and other organizations whose members are on the front lines of health care delivery in Canada. In my discussions with these groups it became evident that reducing wait times is a priority we share together and that the wait times guarantee becomes the logical and necessary extension of that goal.

[Translation]

In fact, the Quebec government recently proposed its own guarantee for certain services. It is the first province to do so.

[English]

Ministers of health have already agreed on an initial set of 10 common benchmarks or common goals for the provision of medical treatments and screening services in key elective areas for cancer screening and care, cardiac surgery, hip and knee replacements and cataracts.

In addition, our government is ensuring the funding needed for action. Canadians through their governments have already made significant investments in the system and this government is on track to put that additional \$41 billion over 10 years into the health care system.

To live up to the commitment of the patient wait times guarantee, the government will make some fundamental changes in our health care system, changes based on four key cornerstones: research, technology, improved collaboration between jurisdictions, and health human resources.

With regard to the first cornerstone, research, the government has committed to increase investment in this area. Mr. Speaker, I do not have to tell you that solid research evidence helps build consensus among the many different groups involved in health care.

[Translation]

We must continue to invest in research on wait times and to concentrate on establishing better indicators, a standard for measuring wait times and the best possible benchmarks based on clinical data.

[English]

This work has already begun through research supported by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. Governments have worked in partnership with CIHR to support research needed to establish an initial set of benchmarks in the five key priority areas. Further research will be carried out to help develop evidence and wait times benchmarks for cardiac procedures, diagnostic imaging and cancer. Research also plays a vital role in reducing wait times by helping to prevent illness.

Consider diabetes, a contributing factor to more than 40,000 deaths each year in Canada. Diabetes one day may no longer be a problem and diabetics may not have to worry about daily insulin injections, thanks to gene therapy research by a team at the University of Calgary.

Also consider breast cancer. Research from the University of Toronto has shown digital mammography is more accurate than film mammography in detecting breast cancer earlier for many women.

Finally, consider mental health, which accounts for up to 40% of disability claims in the workplace at a cost of up to \$33 billion annually. CIHR has started a major research initiative on mental health in the workplace to find solutions to this huge drain on productivity.

Preventing or at least curbing the impact of any one of those conditions helps keep people healthier and reduces the strain on the health care system. It is supported by our government through CIHR and other organizations.

• (1350)

[Translation]

The government is convinced of the importance of research and will apply clinical results to an action plan for health care. This will improve the lives of all Canadians.

*The Address**[English]*

The second cornerstone is the need to continue to pursue advances in and the better adoption of information and communications technology in the health system. This will ensure better productivity, better information sharing and most importantly, better and more timely access to care for all Canadians. It is not about collecting data for data's sake, but rather on transforming access to the health care system and making informed management decisions. These technologies will ensure that patients do not have to repeat their health histories to several providers while going through the different stages of the health care system. They will provide health professionals on the front lines with the information they require to make the best choices for patients.

This use of technology can ensure that the people who are managing and coordinating the system have the information they need in order to meet patient wait time targets. Some regions are sharing diagnostic imaging between hospitals and throughout the country, telehealth initiatives are bringing vital health care services to people in remote communities. In most provinces there are already websites and online access management registries providing data on wait times and performance indicators.

Improved systems increase productivity, enhance access to information and ultimately reduce patient wait times and help enhance access to care.

The third cornerstone of change is improved collaboration between federal, provincial and territorial governments. Canadians have no interest in jurisdictional squabbling. They want results. We need to move away from talking about who is responsible for change and accept that we have a shared responsibility in delivering quality health care for all. On this front this government will lead the charge.

*[Translation]*

We must not focus solely on our similarities in terms of needs and values. We must respect and understand the differences, not only between provinces and territories, but also within the Canadian population. With an awareness of these differences, we will be better positioned to identify best practices throughout the country and to share them in order to improve health care delivery in the best interest of all Canadians.

The provinces and the territories have made significant progress. Together with the Canadian Institute for Health Information, they are working on developing standard means of measuring wait times. This will allow for uniform measurement of wait times across Canada and for accountability.

*[English]*

The Cardiac Care Network of Ontario and the Saskatchewan Surgical Care Network are just two examples of systems that most provinces now have that rank patients on a waiting list according to urgency, so that those who need the service most get the attention their condition demands.

Collaboration among governments, clinicians, regional health authorities and researchers through the western Canada wait list project has been instrumental in developing prioritization tools to ensure that patients waiting for key services are treated fairly.

Some provinces now have centralized booking for particular types of treatment to streamline patient referrals and they are already producing excellent results. I am speaking of initiatives like Alberta's hip and knee pilot project, which has been part of reducing wait time from 47.7 weeks to 4.7 weeks for hip and knee replacements.

As mentioned in the Speech from the Throne, making our health system timely and sustainable requires innovation. All these innovative approaches clearly demonstrate that patient centred innovation is achievable within our current public system. They show that common commitment to results that Canadians want and which our government will support and encourage.

The fourth and final cornerstone of change in our health system is to address health human resource issues. We are talking about the women and men on the front lines of health care in Canada, doctors, nurses and other professionals. They want the best for patients and they want a system that works for all of us.

● (1355)

*[Translation]*

I wish to work actively with our partners from provincial and territorial governments, as well as with stakeholders, to provide Canada with the best pool and distribution of skilled workers to fill the many roles vital to our health system.

*[English]*

We have seen recent increases in the number of student placements in medical schools. We have seen considerable growth in the numbers of provincially funded openings for post-medical school education in our teaching hospitals and similar facilities. We are seeing more positions opened to the international medical graduates who have made Canada their home and who want to use their talents and expertise in this country.

Nurses and other health care professionals provide care before, during and after surgical interventions. Effective recruitment and retention initiatives are imperative to make sure that we have enough qualified workers to support the care guarantee and to reduce the burden of waiting.

The number of nurses is increasing. For example, the nurse practitioner role is being enhanced, which helps to improve access to health care. We are seeing better workforce planning as well as investment in promoting healthier, more stable workplace environments.

While these developments are important, we need to make more progress in exploring how health professionals work together and share responsibility. We need to explore opportunities for new and emerging health professions. This will require improving how health professionals work together, share responsibility and collaborate.

*Statements by Members*

I also want to advise hon. members of our government's support for the Canadian strategy for cancer control. The Prime Minister has been clear about his support for the five year strategy at a cost of nearly \$50 million per year.

The Speech from the Throne sets out the government's commitment to Canadians. It puts this government, the House and the country on a path that will mean increased benefits and better results for Canadians. I am honoured to have the responsibility for a priority that means so much to Canadians, ensuring Canadians receive the health care they deserve.

The government is committed to supporting and enabling innovative approaches to health care delivery. We will do so in ways consistent with the principles of universality and accessibility in the Canada Health Act.

I have been pleased to have had the discussions I have had with my provincial and territorial counterparts and with leaders of health organizations.

Quality health care is the foundation of Canadian priorities. Parry Sounders and Muskokans are counting on me to represent their values and interests in this place. Canadians are counting on all of us in the House to improve the foundation and build a better health care system for all.

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

### QUEEN ELIZABETH II

**Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on Friday, April 21, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II will celebrate her eightieth birthday. On behalf of the Government of Canada, my colleagues and I would like to convey our most sincere wishes to Her Majesty for many more years of health and happiness as our head of state.

The Crown of Canada is a unique part of not only our system of government but our national identity. During a speech delivered at the Alberta Legislature last May 24, Her Majesty the Queen stated:

—I want the Crown in Canada to represent everything that is best and most admired in the Canadian ideal. I will continue to do my best to make it so during my lifetime, and I hope you will all continue to give me your help in this task...as, together, we continue to build a country that remains the envy of the world.

May Her Majesty enjoy many more years of health and happiness and may we, on her eightieth birthday, join in saying happy birthday to Her Majesty.

\* \* \*

● (1400)

### 2006 COMMONWEALTH GAMES

**Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to pay a special tribute to a young athlete who lives in my riding of Don Valley East.

Ms. Brittnee Habbib is a senior high performance gymnast who, at the age of 17, has already compiled a long list of impressive accomplishments. Brittnee trains six hours a day, six days a week. In

addition to gymnastics, she is equally determined to keep up her independent studies at the Mary Ward Catholic School, one of the two schools in Canada offering this program.

Recently, Brittnee was in Melbourne, Australia, and competed in the 18th Commonwealth Games. Along with her fellow teammates, Brittnee brought home a bronze medal for Canada in the artistic women's gymnast category.

I ask all members of this House to join me in saluting Brittnee Habbib, a true Canadian champion.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### MARC THIBAUT

**Ms. Louise Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it is with heartfelt emotion that I pay tribute today to Marc Thibault, who passed away on March 13.

For nearly four decades, Marc Thibault was a strong and vocal defender of the journalistic independence of Radio-Canada's news service.

He ran the educational and public affairs broadcast service from 1957 to 1964, and the news service from 1968 to 1981. He served as policy director for French network programming until his retirement in 1985 and he chaired the Conseil de presse du Québec from 1987 to 1991.

My Bloc Québécois colleagues join me in extending our best wishes to Monique, Sophie and Luc following the loss of a man who was exceptional in many ways.

\* \* \*

[English]

### EKATI DIAMOND MINE

**Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, congratulations on your election.

I rise on an issue of immediate importance to my constituents: the strike by the members of the Public Service Alliance of Canada workers at BHP Billiton's Ekati diamond mine. These 400 workers are fighting for the basic Canadian labour standards of seniority, pay equity and fair wages in their first contract with this huge multinational corporation.

BHP Billiton has responded with delaying tactics and by continuing to make contract proposals that have been rejected time and again by the workers.

I have been informed that BHP Billiton, a multinational with profits in the billions last year, has said it will continue to operate using private contractors who are not part of the union. This decision could lead to a long and difficult dispute.

The people of the Northwest Territories want to see this dispute resolved quickly but fairly. By and large, northerners get very little from the exploitation of their resources, other than some jobs and business opportunities. Northern workers put up with harsh conditions and long absences from their families in order to work at these mines. It is only right that they be treated fairly by their employers.

Because the non-renewable resources of the Northwest Territories are controlled by the government, these workers are regulated under the federal labour code. I ask both the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and the Minister of Human Resources to take an active interest—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Niagara West—Glanbrook.

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#### VINTNERS AWARDS

**Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as this is the first time that I rise in this the 39th Parliament, I would first like to thank the people of Niagara West—Glanbrook for once again putting their trust in me to be their representative.

I also rise today to congratulate the many vintners who were recently recognized at the Cuvée Wine Awards, where winemakers select the best of the best.

I cannot overstate the importance of the Canadian wine industry to the Canadian economy. Canada has over 240 wineries with a combined retail sales of nearly \$1.2 billion.

The industry accounts for up to 10,000 direct and indirect jobs, an estimated \$400 million in tourism revenues, over \$120 million in federal tax revenues, and another \$600 million in provincial revenue.

In addition to the winemakers themselves, more than 600 independent grape growers nationwide also supply the industry.

The efforts of grape growers and vintners have yielded exceptional Canadian wines. These national gems should be shared with the world. To that end, we need to increase their presence on the international market. I encourage Canadians to support their local wineries and their fellow Canadians. I encourage the government to promote the Canadian wine industry, both domestically and abroad.

\* \* \*

• (1405)

#### 2006 WINTER OLYMPICS

**Hon. Andy Scott (Fredericton, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to congratulate the athletes and staff from New Brunswick who represented our province at the 2006 Winter Olympics in Italy.

We are particularly proud of Russ Howard and the Canadian men's curling team, who captured the gold medal in men's curling. Mr. Howard is the first New Brunswick athlete, and at age 50 the oldest Canadian, to win a gold medal at the Winter Olympics.

I also wish to recognize our other athletes who competed: Serge Despres of Cocagne in bobsleigh, Milaine Thériault of Saint-Quentin in cross-country skiing, and Shawn Sawyer of Edmundston in figure skating.

#### Statements by Members

Our coaches, officials and mission staff also contributed to the great showing by our athletes, including: Jay Keddy, Betty Dermer-Norris, Mark Fawcett, Derek Doucette, Stéphane Hachey and Sally Rehorick.

Each member of the Canadian Olympic contingent did a spectacular job. As a country, we should all be very proud of their achievements.

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#### ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

**Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today as the member of Parliament for Langley to express huge thanks to our new Conservative government. Langley and Kwantlen First Nation have just received a federal commitment for up to \$2.25 million toward the Bedford Channel and McMillan Island project.

Kwantlen First Nation lives on McMillan Island in the middle of the Fraser River. Its members fish in Bedford Channel. For the last 30 years, Kwantlen has been pleading for help to protect its island. Every year acres have been disappearing into the Fraser River. Tragically, their pleas have fallen on deaf ears, until now.

It was one of my greatest political experiences to see the new Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development work on this project. I am proud of him and our new Conservative government for providing funds based on need, not on a Liberal culture of entitlement.

I would also like to thank the province of B.C., the Township of Langley, WesGroup/ParkLane, and the GVRD. Success happened because Langley stakeholders worked together and this government listened and helped.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### THE GASPÉ

**Mr. Raynald Blais (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Gaspé was recently struck by more bad luck. On March 21, 2006, Fruits de mer Gascons decided to remain closed for this crab fishing season, which means job losses for 280 people. Approximately 130 of them could be relocated to two other plants in the area. The others, however, will be forced to find work elsewhere.

Since jobs are few and far between in the Gaspé, the federal government must intervene. Through the Canadian support program for the economy of Gaspé and the Magdalen Islands, the municipality of Port-Daniel-Gascons could hire a commissioner to promote diversification. That individual could then implement a development strategy for the region and perhaps even help former Fruits de mer Gascons employees develop their entrepreneurial skills.

The minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for Quebec Regions must act quickly, because former Fruits de mer Gascons employees will soon be left with no income.

*Statements by Members*

[English]

**VAISAKHI**

**Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Conservative government, I wish to congratulate Sikhs in Canada and around the world on the celebration of Vaisakhi.

In 1699 the 10th Guru, Sri Guru Gobind Sing Ji, created Khalsa. By baptizing or partaking in amrit, he awakened the dormant slumbering spirit of a person who rediscovered his or her divinity, sovereignty and humanity. The Guru Ji gave Sikhs the name Singh or Kaur, a visible identity, and the five Kakars that are globally recognized as religious symbols. He also gave Sikhs a code of conduct and discipline. The creation of Khalsa meant the elimination of all creed or caste based on disparities and discriminations. His teachings are for all humankind.

In the last century, Sikh Canadians have made significant contributions to the social, cultural and economic prosperity of our great nation. I express the very best wishes to all on the celebration of Vaisakhi.

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**CHILD CARE**

**Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.):** One thousand, two hundred and three, Mr. Speaker, that is, 1,203 spaces will be eliminated in my region if the Liberal agreements on child care are eliminated.

This underscores the truth of the Conservative plan on child care. It robs choice from Canadians. It steals it from Canadian families. It means less spaces. It means poorer quality child care. It means less accessibility.

This cynical, lazy plan will replace a national system of early childhood development with little more than \$3 a day.

I urge the government and all members of this House to stand up for a national child care plan, to stand up and ensure that Canadians have real choice in child care and to support what the previous government has done.

\* \* \*

● (1410)

**CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA**

**Mrs. Patricia Davidson (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, earlier today, the Conservative government introduced the most comprehensive anti-corruption legislation in Canadian history, the federal accountability act. This groundbreaking legislation is all about moving from the Liberals' culture of entitlement to a culture of accountability.

For example, the act will ban big corporations and big unions from giving one single dollar to political candidates. Donations will be limited to \$1,000 from individuals only. These changes will make Canadians feel more confident about the integrity of the democratic process.

On January 23, Canadians sent a clear and resounding message that they wanted a change from Liberal corruption and Liberal scandal. They elected Conservatives to deliver effective and

accountable government. With our plan, I am proud to say that this Conservative government is standing up for accountability and standing up for Canada.

\* \* \*

**ETHICS IN PUBLIC AFFAIRS**

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today to pay tribute to a great Canadian. Tonight, Carleton University will present the Kroeger College award for ethics in public affairs to the immensely deserving Stephen Lewis. This award honours those individuals who lead by example through their fundamental commitment to ethics and values in public life.

Stephen Lewis is an inspiration to all Canadians and indeed to people around the world. He has shown us that courage, integrity and dignity are not merely ideals but values that all in public life should reach for.

Through his important humanitarian work as the United Nations special envoy for AIDS in Africa and through the Stephen Lewis Foundation, this Canadian statesman and citizen of the world is drawing attention to the terrible reality of AIDS.

[Translation]

He has dedicated himself heart and soul to educating the world about AIDS, raising funds and obtaining assistance to fight this terrible disease.

[English]

I call on all hon. members to join with New Democrats in saluting the work and achievements of Stephen Lewis.

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**PUBLIC TRANSIT**

**Hon. Navdeep Bains (Mississauga—Brampton South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to urge the Conservative government to support public transit initiatives in Mississauga and Brampton.

The projects will cost an estimated \$280 million for the AcceleRide system in Brampton and \$270 million for the BRT initiative in Mississauga. These initiatives will make our public transit systems more efficient and attractive to our commuters, which in turn will help drive the local economy.

The Government of Ontario has fulfilled its commitment to upgrade our transit systems by providing Brampton with \$95 million and Mississauga with \$90 million.

The Liberal government in the previous session showed its support for Ontario by delivering \$1.9 billion over five years in gas tax revenues for sustainable funding for our roads, transit and infrastructure.

On behalf of the residents of Mississauga—Brampton South, I would like to urge the Conservative government to include funding for GTA transit in the upcoming budget.

[Translation]

### RÉAL LÉTOURNEAU

**Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, last February the Sherbrooke Chamber of Commerce and the Eastern Townships Regional Chamber of Commerce bestowed the title of *Grand Estrien* on Réal Létourneau. I salute this multi-talented gentleman.

Vice-president of the Eastern Townships with Raymond Chabot Grant Thornton, Réal Létourneau is a man of integrity, a visionary who gives of his time and ideas to benefit the community. He deserves much of the credit for introducing *Innovalia*, the first Quebec forum for innovative companies, to the Eastern Townships.

Réal Létourneau is a source of inspiration who is always encouraging people to seek innovative solutions that will propel his corner of the country to new heights. He recently cochaired a Chamber of Commerce seminar on future directions for Sherbrooke. This seminar resulted in a number of promising projects.

On behalf of the citizens of Sherbrooke and the Eastern Townships, I would like to congratulate Réal Létourneau and thank him for being a model for all of us and a proud spokesperson for Quebec values.

\* \* \*

[English]

### TAXATION

**Mr. Ken Boshcoff (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the people of Canada are very clear about the issue of raising personal income tax. Their message is, “Don’t”.

As part of its agenda, the government has plans to raise income taxes in spite of overwhelming opposition to this Conservative idea.

Organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce are urging the government to respect the needs of low and modest income earners. Why will the government not listen to the people? These are voices of rationality and intelligence.

Raising income taxes, as the Conservatives plan to do, will hurt Canadians rather than help them. I ask them to please stop, listen and act rationally.

\* \* \*

•(1415)

### CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA

**Mr. Fabian Manning (Avalon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as this is my first opportunity to stand and speak in the House, I want to sincerely thank the wonderful people from the riding of Avalon for what I believe to be an honour and a privilege to represent them and be their voice in this new Conservative Government of Canada.

On January 23 the voters of Avalon joined Canadians from coast to coast and supported our party and its plans for the future of our great country. Those plans include cleaning up government and making it the most open, accountable and transparent government Canada has ever seen.

With the introduction today of the federal accountability act, which will include the most sweeping changes to the access to

### Oral Questions

information law in our history, we will witness Canadian democracy the way it should be done. For 13 years the Liberals were not able to understand the difference between their party and the government. Millions and millions of dollars were hidden in unaccountable foundations and were never opened to public scrutiny.

The proposals we are putting forward today are truly groundbreaking. Once passed, they will change the way business is done in Ottawa forever.

## ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

### FEDERAL ACCOUNTABILITY ACT

**Hon. Bill Graham (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, during the election campaign we heard a lot of promises about the legislation introduced today. Where is there something in the bill to stem the flood of Conservative staffers now lobbying their bosses in cabinet? Where is the Prime Minister's pledge to implement the Information Commissioner's recommendations?

Yesterday, the President of the Treasury Board told the House that the government would proceed with all its campaign promises. However this selective accountability act hardly achieves that.

Maybe it is time for the Prime Minister to come clean with the House and tell Canadians that he has no intention whatsoever of living up to those campaign promises.

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the President of the Treasury Board has just introduced the most sweeping reforms in the history of this Parliament to establish accountability and end corruption. His accountability act would put an end to the influence of big money in federal political parties by banning union and corporate contributions and limiting individual donations. It would stop former ministers, ministerial staffers and senior public servants from becoming lobbyists for five years. It would offer ironclad protection to whistleblowers. It would give the Auditor General the power to follow the money, and hundreds of other recommendations that—

**The Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

[Translation]

**Hon. Bill Graham (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let us talk about sweeping. I must say that during the last election campaign, the Prime Minister said, and I quote, “a Conservative government will implement the Information Commissioner's recommendations for reform of the Access to Information Act”. There was no ambiguity during the election campaign.

The Prime Minister was never afraid to speak his mind. Today it is clear that he is more about talking than action.

Was it the thirst for power that brought on such a radical change?

*Oral Questions*

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the bill presented today by the President of the Treasury Board will provide the greatest expansion to the Access to Information Act in the history of this Parliament. This bill is broad and includes the independent officers and senior officials of Parliament and of the major crown corporations, including Canada Post, Via Rail, CBC and several other institutions and foundations. It is important. The last time this Parliament voted on access to information, this hon. member opposed our—

**The Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

[*English*]

**Hon. Bill Graham (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we oppose those propositions for exactly the reason that we are upset today. They are totally and utterly inadequate. The *Globe and Mail* observed today that this commitment to access to information, which was the core of his promise to clean up government, just is not there.

Earlier today the President of the Treasury Board spoke of earning the trust of Canadians. Does the Prime Minister really believe that this failure to live up to the campaign commitments will earn the trust of Canadians?

• (1420)

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition started out saying that we had not gone far enough on access to information and now he is saying that we have gone too far on access to information. I wish he would get his story straight.

When the member and the party opposite talk about using lobbyists, I just want to point out a press release I have here dated February 10 when the Leader of the Opposition announced his other House officers, his House leader, the chief opposition whip and caucus roles. This press release said that for further information to contact susan@blueskystrategygroup.com. In other words, even in opposition they are still run out of lobby firms.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**NATIONAL DEFENCE**

**Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, when the Conservatives unveiled their defence platform, their defence critic at the time identified two of his clients that could obtain contracts with the armed forces. Today, as Minister of Defence, he has responsibility for files involving companies he once lobbied for.

Why has the Prime Minister not prohibited this sort of practice in the accountability act?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would repeat that the code we have just tabled is more stringent than before. The Minister of National Defence will abide by all the previous rules and all the more stringent rules set by this government.

**Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister knows full well that the appearance of conflict of interest is just as important as conflict of interest itself.

Why not simply acknowledge the situation?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I just said, this party, the minister and all the members of the cabinet intend to obey the law. That is what sets us apart from the Liberals.

\* \* \*

**SOFTWOOD LUMBER**

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, last October in a debate in the House, the Conservative Party called for a program of loan guarantees in the softwood lumber industry. One month later, it reiterated its call for such a program during a press conference with the Bloc and the NDP.

During the election campaign, the Conservative Party promised loan guarantees to the softwood lumber industry. Yesterday, the Minister of Industry said he would reveal his intentions regarding loan guarantees in due course.

Will the Prime Minister speak to his Minister of Industry and remind him that in due course means it is here and now that loan guarantees must be given?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we are in discussions with the President of the United States in order to resolve the softwood lumber dispute. This would obviously be the ideal solution for the country as a whole and the entire industry.

If there is no solution, the Minister of Industry intends to propose loan guarantees and help to the industry. However, the ideal solution is to resolve the problem.

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is saying the same thing as the previous government. He claims we will resolve the dispute with the United States.

I recall that the Prime Minister said, as Leader of the Opposition, that it was not enough and that we had to do whatever was necessary. According to him, nagging the States was not enough, we had to show them we were serious. In his opinion, loan guarantees had to be offered and that would show them that we supported our companies.

I would like to hear the same statement today, now that he is on the other side of the House. He made promises here and promised to honour them. Now he is doing nothing. I call on him to act and honour the promises he made as Leader of the Opposition.

**Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the government is very much aware of the challenges facing workers in the softwood lumber industry. We are currently looking at all the options for a plan that properly supports businesses in the softwood lumber sector.

I would like to say that the members of the Bloc Québécois should recognize that the new Conservative government is on the right road to resolving the softwood lumber dispute and that they will never have the power to resolve this dispute themselves.

*Oral Questions*

•(1425)

**Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the new minister that it is not enough to have power; you also have to have the will.

Forestry companies in a region like mine are crying out for help. The forestry workers are crying out for help. The families are crying out for help. In the meantime, the Minister of Industry is telling us that he will act in due time. I want to know: does acting in due time not mean acting right now, immediately, on behalf of our constituents?

**Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the previous Liberal government allowed the softwood lumber conflict to deteriorate since 2002. The previous government was unable to maintain relations with our neighbours to resolve this matter. MPs from the Liberal Party of Canada, four days before the election was called, pulled a so-called plan out of a hat to help the softwood lumber industry without even securing the money that was needed for this help.

We will act in the interest of the industry and in the interest of all Canadians.

**Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, allow me to remind the Minister of Industry once again that it is true that his colleague, the Minister of International Trade, did nothing when he was a Liberal. That said, at least his colleague left \$800 million in loan guarantees.

Why will the minister not act now with this \$800 million in loan guarantees for the sake of the companies that are crying out for help?

**Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the softwood lumber companies are asking us to resolve this issue as quickly as possible. Their money is there: \$5.3 billion is dormant in the United States and the previous government is to blame.

We will correct the situation and act according to the demands of the industry and in the interest of Canadians.

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[English]

## AFGHANISTAN

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, last night we had a debate on Afghanistan and a number of questions were asked, questions about the goals and the nature of the mission, questions about the command structure, about the way we would measure progress, about a definition of success, and about an exit strategy.

The problem was that we did not get answers to these questions. Can the Prime Minister tell us when will Canadians get answers to these fundamental questions about our mission in Afghanistan or will he leave us in the dark as the Liberal Party did before him?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we know why we are in Afghanistan. We are in Afghanistan as part of a global effort to fight terrorism and to protect ourselves from both terrorism and the drug trade.

We are also in Kandahar province providing international leadership to these efforts. We are bringing democracy and humanitarian assistance to the Afghan people. We are assisting the Afghan forces with the building of security in their own country. We are going to be there until we succeed in these goals.

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, apparently we are not going to get answers to the very questions that were asked by the Minister of National Defence when he was in the opposition benches.

Let me ask the Minister of National Defence because perhaps now he is prepared to finally give us some answers. What is the command and control structure? What are the criteria for success? What will be the definition of progress and how is it going to be reported back to the Canadian people? What is the exit strategy?

Will the minister give us these answers or will we continue to face the obfuscation that we heard last night and once again here today?

**Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the answer to all those questions but 35 seconds kind of limits me. We have an integrated command structure from NDHQ all the way to a private on the ground. We have set the goals for what we have to achieve. We know what the allies are doing. We have the robust rules. We have the policies. We have everything we need to be effective in Kandahar, so within 35 second I cannot do more than that.

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•(1430)

## NATIONAL DEFENCE

**Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Vancouver South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the media have exposed the obvious conflicts of interest of the Minister of National Defence on his procurement files involving his former clients. The minister says we should trust him because he complies with the conflict of interest code by, thank God, not owning any shares in defence companies.

The question is not if, but when will the minister step aside from these files?

**Hon. John Baird (President of the Treasury Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that question is rather ridiculous. We have raised the bar when it comes to ethical conduct. We have raised the bar for the first time in Canadian history by enshrining into legislation a real conflict of interest law in the country.

We are also expanding the capacity of the individual who will be able to oversee this law for both the House and the Senate. That individual will be someone with judicial or quasi-judicial experience.

I have every confidence that the defence minister will continue to follow all of the code and then once again will follow the law when it is enshrined by the House.

**Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Vancouver South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on the same day that the Prime Minister is tabling his selective accountability act, he refuses to accept that he made a mistake in appointing a lobbyist as Minister of National Defence.

*Oral Questions*

Will the Prime Minister live up to his own standards and order the minister to step aside from these defence procurement files?

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this member and others keep repeating that ridiculous allegation. Here is something else they should keep repeating. The Minister of National Defence is somebody who has dedicated his life to the best interests of this country and that should be applauded by everyone across this country.

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**LOBBYISTS**

**Hon. Stephen Owen (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in his speech on the selective accountability act, the Prime Minister stated, "Politics will no longer be a stepping stone to a lucrative career lobbying government".

I am glad to hear the enthusiasm over there for this important principle. Given this enthusiasm, could the Prime Minister please explain why he thinks that recently departed senior Conservative MPs and their staff should not also be banned from lobbying?

**Hon. John Baird (President of the Treasury Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this morning the government tabled the most comprehensive reforms to regain the public trust that was so egregiously violated by the Liberal Party in its 13 years in office. We are bringing in substantial reforms for the first time to have a five year cooling off period for anyone who works in the executive branch, whether they be ministers, ministerial staffers or senior governmental officials. We will ensure that the only motivation governing the people in those positions is the public interest and not wanting to further their own private interests.

**Hon. Stephen Owen (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, those are noble words from the minister of selective accountability.

Let us look at the selective nature of what is being proposed. Dozens of Conservatives' ex-staff have relationships of influence with cabinet ministers and even the Prime Minister, and are lining up as lobbyists. The Prime Minister's former policy chief is a lobbyist whose client list includes major communications, energy and investment companies, each of which is currently making representations to the government on the development of key legislation.

Does the Prime Minister think that this is appropriate?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what is appropriate is that we fulfill our election commitments by ensuring that everybody respects the Lobbyists Registration Act and that we put real teeth in it. That is what we have done.

If the party opposite wants to suggest that every member of Parliament, not just government ministers, should be covered by the Lobbyists Registration Act and cooling off periods, they can propose that and, frankly, they can apply it to all the Liberals who are out there working in lobbying firms out of their government.

● (1435)

[Translation]

**UNESCO**

**Ms. Francine Lalonde (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, during his election campaign the Prime Minister made a major promise to Quebec that it would have a place in UNESCO similar to the one it had during the summit of the Francophonie.

Does the Minister of Foreign Affairs agree that Quebec is entitled to speak at UNESCO as it is at the summit of the Francophonie?

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the minister, Ms. Gagnon-Tremblay, and I are discussing the details of Quebec's role at UNESCO. We expect to reach an agreement quickly.

**Ms. Francine Lalonde (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, Quebec also has voting privileges at the summit of the Francophonie, but that is not possible at UNESCO.

Does the Minister of Foreign Affairs intend, following his discussions with Ms. Gagnon-Tremblay, to at least partially honour his leader's election promise by declaring that, in view of Quebec's jurisdictions, the Government of Canada would abstain in any vote in which there was disagreement between it and the Government of Quebec?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we are negotiating Quebec's role in UNESCO. There are clearly three concurrent philosophies in this Parliament. The Liberal Party does not want Quebec to have a role at UNESCO. The Bloc Québécois does not want Canada to be able to vote at UNESCO. The Conservative Party favours a special role for Quebec, within the Canadian federation.

\* \* \*

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AGENCY OF CANADA**

**Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, when the minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec took office he took away the power to authorize small Canada Economic Development grants in the regions from all regional public servants.

How can the Prime Minister hold himself out as promoting accountability on the part of public servants and agree to his own minister taking away all decision-making power from them and taking it over himself?

**Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Labour and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as the minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, I am responsible to Parliament and to this House for managing that department properly. As well, out of a desire to be more aware of what the department is doing in each of the regions of Quebec, I thought it appropriate to take responsibility for overseeing every case in order to ascertain where the money was going in each of the regions of Quebec.

*Oral Questions*

By being more current on what we are in a position to do, I get a better reading of what we will be able to do in future.

**Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, under the pretext of sound management and efficiency, the minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec is taking us all several years backward by politicizing the smallest regional development grant.

How can the Prime Minister hold himself out as promoting accountability on the part of public servants and agree to his own minister taking away all decision-making power from them and taking it over himself?

**Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Labour and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, when we talk about abuses committed in the past, we have only to look at the way the previous government managed things and the sponsorship scandal, and we can see a lot of things.

That being said, I would tell this House that 76% of projects are for about \$100,000 or less and that 16% of projects are for between \$100,000 and \$200,000. That means that about 90% of the projects at Canada Economic Development were never seen by the previous minister. Is that the way to practise sound management and know what is going on in your department?

\* \* \*

• (1440)

[English]

**LOBBYISTS**

**Mr. Brian Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, David Salvatore, now a registered lobbyist, worked until the month of March for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, one full month after that minister was sworn into cabinet. That is a revolving door that would make the trade minister's head spin.

Will the Prime Minister put forward an amendment to close this blatant loophole or is he willing to let his selective accountability act stand silent on this important issue?

**Hon. John Baird (President of the Treasury Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this morning the government tabled the most comprehensive measures in Canadian history to restore public confidence. For the first time, if one works in the executive branch of government or if one works in government, there will be a five year cooling off period.

If the member opposite would like to propose an amendment in committee to require all assistants to MPs, both in government and in opposition, and their staffs, I would be most interested to see it.

**Mr. Brian Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would be afraid to because there would be nobody left to lobby the Conservative government.

That is a distinction that is not in the ethics code. The relationship is not how one is paid but what influence or relationship one has. Mr. Salvatore not only worked for the minister but he worked for the Prime Minister when the Prime Minister was in opposition. That is a close link.

How can the Prime Minister square this circle when it comes to real accountability?

**Hon. John Baird (President of the Treasury Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it seems we have a new policy from our friends in the Liberal Party. It seems that they now want to have a five year cooling off period for people who now do not work in government.

The reality is that there was a revolving door between lobbyists in the previous government and ministers. That is why the public trust was so egregiously violated. That is why such extreme measures are necessary to rebuild the public trust that was so fundamentally violated by the corruption, scandals and mismanagement of the previous government.

\* \* \*

**CHILD CARE**

**Mr. Omar Alghabra (Mississauga—Erindale, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Conservative member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke said that the Quebec model of child care, adopted by the former government, was a Soviet style child care.

Is that the position of the government or will the Prime Minister apologize for those remarks?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have been very clear about our plan. It is to be a universal benefit of \$1,200 a year delivered directly to parents, not to politicians, for each child under the age of six.

Despite the promises by the members across the floor to do this for 13 years, we will create 125,000 new day care spaces, 125,000 more than the previous government.

**Mr. Omar Alghabra (Mississauga—Erindale, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, clearly there is something in common between myself and the minister. We both have not come to grips with the fact that her party is in government.

The government now proposes to download the responsibility of creating quality child care spaces to businesses. The head of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business said that the Conservative proposal to lure businesses into child care would fail. The minister herself has even acknowledged that previous tax credits have failed to stimulate the expansion of day care spaces. Clearly the government does not have a plan.

Why is the government abandoning millions of children?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his maiden question.

He did talk about Soviet style child care. I would observe that after 13 years in office the Liberals did not create any child care spaces and did not give any money to parents. I would say that their plan crumbled just like the old Soviet Union.

*Oral Questions***FEDERAL ACCOUNTABILITY ACT**

**Mr. Dave Batters (Palliser, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have witnessed 13 years of Liberals rewarding their friends, funnelling taxpayer money to Liberal campaigns, waste and corruption.

Public trust needs to be restored. It started today with the introduction of the government's federal accountability act.

Could the President of the Treasury Board tell us why he felt it necessary to bring in a bill with over 250 sections?

• (1445)

**Hon. John Baird (President of the Treasury Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, restoring integrity to government is certainly a big job after the experience of the last 13 years of the party opposite.

The federal accountability act is indeed a big document and a comprehensive document. It is the first honest, meaningful step to begin to re-earn the public trust, the public trust that was so shattered from what we learned at the Gomery inquiry. We heard stories of kickbacks, of corruption and of envelopes with thousands of dollars in cash trading hands.

The reason the act is so big is that it requires—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Sackville—Eastern Shore.

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is a great day in the country when the leadership of Premier Gary Doer of Manitoba brings a real accountability package to members of Parliament, in their case, members of the legislature, when it comes to responsibility to their constituents.

This little blue package contains nothing about floor crossing by members of Parliament going from one party to another during their term in office.

My question is for the Prime Minister. Why was this very important aspect of democracy left out of his accountability package?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, that was left out of the accountability package because it is not part of the plans of the government. We do not agree with that particular policy. I understand the hon. member's party does. The members of that party can always bring forward that measure in a private member's bill and the House can vote on it, but in the meantime the President of the Treasury Board has seen fit not to limit what his own colleague terms "my powers of seduction".

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it took the Liberals 12 years to develop that form of arrogance. It took the Prime Minister and his government 12 days to do that.

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

**The Speaker:** Order, please. It would be helpful if we had a little order in the House and I know the hon. member for Sackville—Eastern Shore is keen to contribute to the order with the rest of his question.

**Mr. Peter Stoffer:** Mr. Speaker, it is quite simple. The people of Vancouver Kingsway, of Kings—Hants, of Newmarket—Aurora and many others, who have been betrayed by their members of

Parliament who crossed the floor during their term of office, do not believe the government is serious when it comes to accountability. How can we have accountability when members are not responsible to the people who elect us?

Will the Prime Minister include the aspect of floor crossing legislation in this accountability package?

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is certainly allowed to bring forward that position. I think his party did it twice in the last Parliament, unsuccessfully, but it certainly has the opportunity to do that again.

I have to say that I am awfully glad to have crossed from that side of the floor to this side of the floor after the election.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of International Trade finally admitted the appearance of a conflict of interest surrounding his ongoing financial relationship with Canfor.

Last week, he stated:

If we ever get to the point where a critical decision would mean too much or too little for Canfor, I would recuse myself.

The negotiations concerning softwood lumber and the reimbursement of billions of dollars cannot be separated.

When will the minister recuse himself?

[*English*]

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member will know, the Minister of International Trade will comply with all the recusal requirements that exist in the Conflict of Interest Code. These requirements were in place when the minister was in the previous government. They did not create a problem then and they do not create a problem now.

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister knows very well that in the previous government the current Minister of International Trade was not negotiating the refund of duties directly with the American administration.

Canfor will be the single largest beneficiary if these illegal tariffs are in fact refunded. The Minister of International Trade has this ongoing financial relationship with Canfor.

Since softwood negotiations and the refund of illegally collected duties go hand in hand, when will the minister protect the integrity of his government and of the negotiations with the United States and recuse himself?

• (1450)

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, these questions are getting to the point of the ridiculous. If this government were to be successful in resolving the softwood lumber dispute and getting the duties back, this would be in the interest of all Canadians.

*Oral Questions*

[Translation]

**SOFTWOOD LUMBER**

**Hon. Jean Lapierre (Outremont, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on December 17, the Prime Minister made a solemn commitment to help the forest industry with loan guarantees, but he also said that his party would provide adequate support for displaced forest workers and their communities.

What did he mean by that?

And what has he done since for forest workers and their communities?

**Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have been working since January 23 to resolve this issue left to us by the previous government after four years of failed discussions with the Americans. We will succeed in making the softwood lumber industry prosperous and competitive in the coming years.

**Hon. Jean Lapierre (Outremont, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, workers have already been displaced, and communities are already being affected.

What does the minister plan to do for these workers and these communities, to make good on the Conservatives' promise?

**Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we plan to work with communities across Canada to make the softwood lumber industry the most competitive in the country and to ensure that it continues to create jobs as it has done in recent years.

\* \* \*

**NATIONAL DEFENCE**

**Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, on December 18, 2005, the Chief of Defence Staff, General Hillier, signed an agreement with the Afghan defence minister regarding the transfer of prisoners captured by Canadian armed forces.

Why has the government not maintained better control over prisoners by ensuring, for example, that Canadian soldiers and diplomats can make personal visits to prisoners, as the Dutch have done?

[English]

**Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I do not know what the member is talking about when he says that this is a difficult process. The process is that if Canadian soldiers capture insurgents or terrorists they hand them over to the Afghan authorities and then the International Red Cross or Red Crescent supervise the detainees. If there is any problem, the Red Cross or Red Crescent would inform us and then we would become involved.

[Translation]

**Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, Canada is obliged to respect the Geneva convention to which, incidentally, it is a signatory.

Will the minister concur that there is nothing in this agreement to prevent the Afghan authorities from transferring prisoners to the American forces, who could then transfer them to Guantanamo, as

we know that the United States does not consider these combatants to be prisoners of war? The minister must amend the agreement.

[English]

**Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as has been mentioned, under the agreement the Red Cross will supervise the detainees in the Afghan prisons. If they were to be transferred to a third party, and why they would be is beyond me because we are giving Afghans to Afghanistan, then the Red Cross would monitor this. If there were a problem, the Red Cross would inform us.

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**CANADA-U.S. BORDER SECURITY**

**Mr. John Maloney (Welland, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, a group of U.S. governors, senators and representatives announced plans to fight the congressional requirement for Canadians and Americans to present passports when crossing our common border. At least these American legislators recognize the devastating effect that passport entry requirements will have on trade and tourism.

This is in contrast to our own government that simply is throwing in the towel and running up the white flag. When will the Minister of Public Safety stand up for Canada?

**Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister already made this matter a priority at the Cancun discussions the very first day, taking it to the top of the list.

I will be meeting with Secretary of State Chertoff next week on this very matter.

We should be reminded that when this item was passed in Congress over two years ago, for over two years the former Liberal government sat on its hands and did nothing. It took this party and another party in opposition to raise the issue. It took our Prime Minister to stand up on this particular issue.

\* \* \*

● (1455)

[Translation]

**ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT**

**Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, under the previous government, the spending of crown corporations and numerous foundations was not known to the public or disclosed to parliamentarians, taxpayers, or the people of Lévis—Bellechasse and Les Etchemins. And yet this is money that belongs to all of us.

In its desire for transparency and turning a new leaf, our government is committed to correcting this situation. We are seeing this today.

Can my hon. colleague the President of the Treasury Board inform this House of his plan concerning the measures to broaden the Access to Information Act, thereby meeting our commitment?

**Hon. John Baird (President of the Treasury Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my dear colleague from Lévis—Bellechasse for his question.

*Oral Questions*

The good news is that, today, the new Government of Canada has introduced a new bill to include many government institutions and agencies and many foundations in the bill on the Access to Information Act.

This is excellent news. Only five months ago, on November 15 of last year, all the hon. members of the Liberal Party, on the other side of the House, including the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Opposition, voted against this bill. Now—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Winnipeg North has the floor.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

**FINANCE**

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we have had years of Liberals denying the very existence of a fiscal imbalance. Now we have a government that at least agrees that it exists but has done nothing. The Liberal cuts have had a clear impact on our society; growing poverty, rising tuition fees and longer waiting lists.

With the premiers meeting in Montreal on this very topic as we speak, would the Minister of Finance outline his government's timetable to solve the fiscal imbalance?

**Hon. Ralph Goodale:** Tell her that poverty is down five points, Jim.

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the former Liberal minister of finance for telling me what I should say. However, instead I will say that we acknowledge that there is a fiscal imbalance, which is a big step forward from the party opposite over the course of the past 13 years.

We await the provincial report from the Council of the Federation which I believe was to be released today. A report will also be released with the budget in this place. We are also waiting for the report that is to come from the O'Brien committee to the federal government, which should be about mid-May, I believe.

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance may be new but he is old hat at saying nothing at all.

[*Translation*]

The fiscal imbalance is a real and complex problem. We are not asking the minister to table his plan for resolving it. We are simply asking the minister whether his government believes there is a fiscal imbalance and what his timetable is for correcting this problem.

[*English*]

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the answer to the first part of the question is yes, we believe in the fiscal imbalance issue. We are going to work very actively on that issue this year, taking into consideration the realities that this is a complex issue which is vitally important to all Canadians in making sense of our fiscal federation.

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**FISHERIES**

**Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Cardigan, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Fisheries is well aware that Prince Edward Island

received a base quota of northern shrimp in the year 2000. The minister indicated that sharing arrangements would be stabilized. This spring the quota for northern shrimp went up substantially. Newfoundland received most of the increase. Prince Edward Island received nothing.

Why did Prince Edward Island not receive its share of northern shrimp quota, and will the minister make sure that Prince Edward Island does receive its fair share of the quota?

**Hon. Loyola Hearn (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what the member has to remember first of all is how Prince Edward Island got its share of northern shrimp in the first place, and he can certainly answer that question.

In relation to this year's fishery, the shrimp fishery is in serious trouble. Every ounce of shrimp this year went to the people who fish it, the fishermen, whether it be the inshore boats or the bigger boats. All shrimp went to the fishermen, where it should go, because that is the only way we can keep the industry alive.

\* \* \*

● (1500)

**LOBBYISTS**

**Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the opposition members are quite hypocritical in their attacks against lobbyists. The member for Outremont lobbied on behalf of various companies, yet he never registered.

Could the President of the Treasury Board tell us how the federal accountability act will crack down on registered lobbyists such as the member for Outremont?

**Hon. John Baird (President of the Treasury Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, one of the holes in the current Lobbyists Registration Act that we are seeking to plug is what we call the Dingwall hole, which does not allow prosecution or investigations of people who break the act and who cannot be held accountable. We will be extending the time in which investigations can occur. We will be extending the fines and penalties to ensure that there are real teeth in the federal accountability act, so we can ensure that the public business is done in the public interest and not for private gain.

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**PRESENCE IN GALLERY**

**The Speaker:** I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of the Hon. Mark Wartman, Minister of Agriculture and Food for Saskatchewan.

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

*The Address***SIKHISM**

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among all parties in the House, and I would like to specifically thank the hon. Minister of Canadian Heritage, the member for Mississauga—Brampton South and the member for Vaudreuil-Soulanges for their support and contribution to the wording of this motion, which was originally proposed by the member for Elmwood—Transcona, and which acknowledges that the member for Bramalea—Gore—Malton is the longest serving Sikh member in the House presently. I believe you will find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That the House recognize the important contribution that Canadian Sikhs have made to Canada and formally acknowledge the significance of the festival of Vaisakhi which celebrates the five Ks of Sikhism and the values of cooperation, justice, equality and freedom as central to human dignity.

**The Speaker:** Does the hon. member for Winnipeg North have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

[*Translation*]

**The Speaker:** The House has heard the wording of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

**SPEECH FROM THE THRONE**

• (1505)

[*English*]

**RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON ADDRESS IN REPLY**

The House resumed consideration of the motion as amended, for an address to Her Excellency the Governor General in reply to her speech at the opening of the session.

**The Speaker:** Before question period, the hon. Minister of Health had the floor. There remain 10 minutes for questions and comments consequent on his speech.

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I was pleased that the minister took the time to outline some of the key priorities, particularly with regard to the importance of research and development in terms of our health models and dealing with some of the important challenges. Since I have been a member of Parliament, health care has been the number one priority of all Canadians. I certainly look forward to hearing from the minister on other initiatives to improve the health and well-being of all Canadians.

One of the key areas of discussion had to do with the important issue of wait time guarantees. The minister will know that in the last Parliament there were substantive discussions with all stakeholders, with the provinces, to come up with the necessary benchmarks to move us forward on this important area. Now that he has the benefit of where we have come so far, what exactly should Canadians reasonably expect from the government, from the Parliament of Canada, in terms of expanding this concept of wait time guarantees, keeping in mind that the Canada Health Act mandate is not to

provide all things that Canadians want, but more important, what all Canadians need?

I wonder if the hon. health minister would like to comment on that important issue.

**Hon. Tony Clement:** Mr. Speaker, I think it is safe to say that the discussions on wait time guarantees have been initiated since the election of this government. They are ongoing.

What I can report to this House is that considerable work has been done on benchmarking in the months gone by. I see wait time guarantees as the logical next step. Once a benchmark has been put in place, that is to say, that a certain procedure should take place within a certain period of time, it is the next logical step for governments to guarantee to the people of Canada that they will in fact get that procedure done or that malady looked after by the health system within that acceptable period of time. To me this is a logical next step. It certainly has its promoters within provincial and territorial governments.

As I mentioned in my remarks, the Government of Quebec recently announced its first set of wait time guarantees on hip, knee and cataract replacements. These are the first wait time guarantees in Canada. I expect they will not be the last.

**Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health will know that first nations, Métis and Inuit people rank dead last on whatever measurement of health one chooses to look at.

The Indian residential schools were an absolute social tragedy for aboriginal people. His government is not going to roll out the agreed upon settlement for sick or elderly survivors of the residential schools even though a lump sum settlement was negotiated and should be rolled out soon. For those who are passing away and are sick and elderly now, there was an \$8,000 lump sum, one time payment. His government is not going to roll that out.

As the Minister of Health, can he do something to urge his cabinet to show some humanitarian compassion and get that money into the hands of the victims now before they pass away?

**Hon. Tony Clement:** Mr. Speaker, as has been outlined by the Minister of Indian Affairs, there is no agreement in place that has been endorsed by a court, so we find ourselves struggling with this issue. It has the full attention of the Minister of Indian Affairs. We all want a settlement as soon as practicable, but it would be inopportune for me to comment any further on what I am sure are very sensitive negotiations.

I can tell the member that native health is obviously a direct responsibility of my department in some manner. Some commitment has been made in the past to improve and augment native health. I think the hon. member would agree with me that it is difficult to fix native health without fixing some other aspects of native life. That requires a comprehensive solution. This government has endorsed the principles that were arrived at in Kelowna. We are certainly grappling to take it beyond principle and into reality.

*The Address*

• (1510)

**Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, with respect to the wait times guarantee, it is all very well to have a guarantee, but at the end of the day, the resources, whether financial or human, have to be available to provide care.

The provinces are the managers of health care. How exactly are they going to pay for individuals to get care with these guarantees? Who is going to pay for it? What is the mechanism? Where is the money going to come from? How is it going to be implemented? How do we expect to ensure that people are going to get this care when we have a national human resources deficit within the context of medical health care professionals? Is the minister willing to work with professional groups to develop a national medical manpower strategy for Canada which our health care workers desperately need?

**Hon. Tony Clement:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has touched on the various elements of my speech to the House on this very issue. As he may recall, earlier today I mentioned four cornerstones for a wait times guarantee to become a reality. They are research, technology, jurisdictional cooperation and health human resources. All those four oars need to be in the water at the same time in order to guide the boat to the required destination.

That is our challenge. We are starting to see some great innovation among the provinces, the province of Quebec being a prime example. It is looking at not only ways to deliver health care better but it is looking at ways to deliver the health care guarantee to make sure the health human resources are in place. This will require federal and provincial collaboration and cooperation as well. We intend to work not only with the province of Quebec but with each and every province on this very important issue.

It would not be my place to pre-empt those discussions with the provinces and territories, but I can assure the House that this is my signal responsibility as Minister of Health and something which I take very seriously.

**Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am looking for the minister's direction in terms of the need for the northern territories to receive better than per capita funding for health care. When it comes to wait times and making health care more available to people, then of course there are also higher costs with that.

How is the minister going to approach this issue with the northern territories?

**Hon. Tony Clement:** Mr. Speaker, this is one of those areas where a bit of investment at the beginning can make a huge difference in terms of overall accessibility to cost. I will give the hon. member an example that is absolutely fitting for northern Canada.

When we invest in information and communications technologies, for instance, telehealth services, it has a huge positive disproportionate impact for northern Canada. The difference is allowing and having individual practitioners, who are able to practise in the north, using telehealth services to diagnose and treat so the patient does not have to travel to Yellowknife, Edmonton or Vancouver.

There is a huge savings in cost with a little investment in some information and communications technologies. That is the kind of

thing I would like to see more of, and I certainly will be directing my government to pursue these initiatives.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Repentigny, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I will share my 20 minutes with the eloquent member for Hochelaga.

I am very pleased to take the floor for the first time in this 39th Parliament. Tradition dictates that, during their first speech in this House, members pay tribute to the people in their riding who made it possible for them to be here to talk about the throne speech and other issues and to pass legislation.

I would therefore be remiss if I did not thank the people of Repentigny. For the fifth time since 1993, they have entrusted me with the responsibility of representing them in this House. I thank the people of Repentigny and my whole campaign team.

I will now come back to the throne speech. I will comment on certain points, ranging from the promises the Conservatives made during the election campaign to the throne speech that was read last week. I will also talk a bit about the accountability act that was introduced this morning. There is a connection between these promises, the throne speech and the Conservatives' first order of business, which was to introduce Bill C-2 on accountability this morning.

This bill represents a few victories for the Bloc Québécois in certain files that we have been working on for a long time. First of all, I will talk about the appointment of returning officers. Further to many discussions, proposals, recommendations and motions by the Bloc Québécois, we are finally being heard and understood. Returning officers will be appointed by the Chief Electoral Officer, following a competition. This is a very good thing for the electoral process.

To the Liberals, who were very worried, I used to like to say in committee that I was sure there were some competent Liberals and that therefore some of them could aspire to the position of returning officer. So they do not have to worry. Maybe 10% of their returning officers will make it through the steps of the process supervised by the Chief Electoral Officer.

Tightening control over political party funding is another fine victory for Quebec and for the Bloc Québécois. Until quite recently, it was, as we say at home, "the one with the deepest pockets" who ruled, that is, certain banks or companies could donate \$100,000, \$200,000 or \$300,000 to the federal parties. We struggled very hard to make the funding of political parties more democratic by drawing on the Quebec model. A first step has been taken. Today, we are eliminating donations from both unions and companies, and we are accepting donations of up to \$1,000 from taxpayers only. This is another fine victory for the Bloc Québécois and for the Quebec model on which the new plan is patterned.

This morning, I had the privilege of attending the lock-up on this bill. In the margin was written, "according to the Quebec model". That really pleased me.

Lots of things, however, were left out of the bill introduced this morning. In our opinion, and we heard this during question period, the fact that adoption of a true reform of the Access to Information Act has been postponed, using one delaying tactic after another, is a major oversight.

This morning, it was indicated in quotation marks in the consultation and information documents that this bill was very complex and that that was the reason why discussions, study papers and other documents were being postponed.

The proposed Accountability Act comprises 317 clauses and it is very complex. Because they had the will, the Conservatives were able, within a very short period of time, to present this first draft. If they had wanted, if they had really exercised their will, this Accountability Act would have included a new version of the Access to Information Act.

• (1515)

Rather than table a complete bill, they are saying, “Here are the documents, a committee could discuss the matter and one day there might be reforms made to the Access to Information Act”. For the Bloc Québécois this is absolutely not enough.

The rest of the Accountability Act is interesting, but I will talk about that after the Easter break. It is a step in the right direction.

I want to point out that there is a lot of rehashing of existing bills, existing policies and existing guidelines. It will be important to go over the bill to look at what is new and what is reheated. This will be important and interesting.

Further in the Speech from the Throne is the subject of child care, or services for young children who attend day care.

There is another rather worrisome matter. I will read an excerpt from the *House of Commons Debates* of Monday, April 10, 2006, page 230. I am pleased to see that the hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke is present in this House, since she is the one I am quoting. She said:

Canadians had been saddled with an interventionist government—

She was talking about the Liberals.

—that without a doubt has been anti-family.

I have no objection so far. She continues by saying:

The worldwide trend away from Soviet style institutionalized day care has been very pronounced in those countries that were formerly part of the old Soviet empire and are now democracies. Our plan to provide benefits directly to families is in tune with the experience of other democratic countries.

I asked the hon. member a question, but she refused to answer. I said that her comments were a direct attack on the Quebec model. We have an institutionalized style of day care. We have a model that is the envy of the rest of Canada, even North America. People come to study what Quebec has done in terms of child care over the past number of years. There is a true choice because there are spaces. Everyone agrees that there is a lack of spaces, but there is a child care system. The hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke said she wanted to offer a choice by providing \$1,200 a year to families, which is roughly \$3 a day before taxes. I asked her to confirm whether her comments referred to the Quebec model. I am quite worried about the Speech from the Throne, which suggests

### *The Address*

there is a will to promote new child care spaces. I will read an excerpt from the Speech from the Throne, page 7:

The Conservative government will also encourage the creation of new child care spaces.

She said that these new places in institutionalized day care made her think of the style of the former Soviet Union. I asked her to repeat her comments and also if that was the position of the Conservative government. Twenty-four hours later, there is still no answer. I hope she was wrong and will correct what she said and there will be a proper discussion on a style of day care, whether it be Quebec's or what the rest of Canada wants, because we are having a real problem interpreting the distribution of powers.

During the election campaign and in the throne speech, a Conservative trend could be seen. During the campaign, they said about Quebec's place in the world and, primarily, at UNESCO, that they wanted a place for it similar to the one it has at the summit of the Francophonie. This was in a speech by the Prime Minister in Quebec City on December 19, if I am not mistaken.

I was the spokesperson for the international Francophonie for many years. I also participated in a number of conferences of the Francophonie. I sat with the Canadian delegation, because I was a federal member. I could share the table with people from Quebec and New Brunswick, because they have a place at the summit of the Francophonie.

• (1520)

When it came time for the Quebec delegation to speak, there was no need to ask the Canadian delegation if it agreed with what Quebec had to say. Quebec had independent status at the summit.

I have no doubt that the Prime Minister, erudite as he is, knew what he was saying when he said in Quebec City he wanted to give Quebec a place at UNESCO similar to the one it had at the summit of the Francophonie. At least, I hope his speech writer knew what he was writing. One wrote and the other knew what he was saying.

In conclusion, the Conservatives made some fine promises during the election campaign. They disavowed a number of them in the throne speech, and their first piece of legislation proves that we need to keep a very close eye on them because they are going to disillusion those who believed in them during the last election campaign.

• (1525)

**Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your re-election as Speaker of this House and also to congratulate my hon. colleague on his brilliant presentation.

I have one question for him. I return to the issue of child care.

Since the Speech from the Throne, a number of government members have spoken in this House. In what way are the proposals in the Speech from the Throne and the speeches of these government members disturbing insofar as the day care system in Quebec is concerned?

*The Address*

**Mr. Benoît Sauvageau:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his question. Allow me the privilege of quoting another passage from the throne speech, before I return to the subject of child care.

On page 8 of the throne speech, it says:

[The government] will work with the government and legislature of Quebec in a spirit of mutual respect and collaboration to advance the aspirations of Quebecers.

They write one thing and do the opposite. That is what is disturbing in the Speech from the Throne, with regard to child care, among other things.

They wrote a short speech, which supposedly said what it wanted to say. The Conservative government said in its throne speech that it would work with the legislature of Quebec in a spirit of mutual respect. If it is sincere, at the very least, it should show some respect for motions passed unanimously in that legislature. When the National Assembly asked for a transfer of funds—the day care system being a provincial jurisdiction—it expected to see some of this mutual respect. Consequently, instead of \$1,200 for each family, this money should be sent to the government, which is better able to create institutions and produce more new day care spaces.

If the Conservative government really wants to work in a spirit of mutual respect with the Government of Quebec, it should show some of this respect by transferring to Quebec the amounts that were promised.

Why is this important? I return to the question asked by my colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue and his concern about child care. The previous government already promised \$800 million for Quebec, an amount that Quebec started to invest. When money is promised, people start to build and create new day care spaces, and that is what happened. Then the next government arrives and says that it is going to eliminate this money and make a lesser, indirect transfer.

It is extremely important to abide by the words that I quoted from page 8 of the throne speech, concerning mutual respect for provincial legislation. This is the government's first opportunity to show its good will.

**Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, may I too congratulate you on your re-election as Speaker. There have certainly been more suspenseful moments in the House, but nevertheless you were elected and you have our confidence.

I would like to thank the constituents of Hochelaga who put their trust in me for the fifth time, as the constituents of the member for Repentigny did for him.

I would also like to highlight two positive outcomes of the general election. In Montreal, the Bloc Québécois increased its seats from three to seven. The House of Commons can expect vigorous and committed participation on behalf of the people of Montreal—the metropolis and the heart of Quebec.

We are equally pleased with the results in the Outaouais, in Gatineau. We had a lot of catching up to do. The Bloc Québécois is very pleased to welcome a new colleague from the region who will also work very hard, not just because he is a historian and a

professor, but because he is determined to make Quebec's voice heard.

I do not wish to show disrespect for my friends, the Liberals—that is not my style—but it must nevertheless be recognized that their 13 members in Quebec represents an all-time low for them. The people have spoken and, in a democracy, our citizens are always right. We must weigh the significance of this vote.

The government before us is nonetheless an odd one. Indeed, they give the impression that, if left to themselves and their own political instincts, they would like to stamp *made in U.S.A.* on the word “Canada”. As justice critic, I am very concerned about the rhetoric from the Conservatives. It almost seems as though they decided to open a branch of the White House right here in the House of Commons. I therefore believe that we must be extremely vigilant and urge them to show much more moderation and relevance in their remarks about justice.

I would be happy to enter into a dialogue on this matter with my Conservative colleagues. However, upon closer review of the Conservative platform, it would seem that we live in a society that is much more violent than it was 20 or 30 years ago.

This very morning, I attended an information session at the Library of Parliament. I reviewed the statistics with an exceptionally bright individual by the name of Lyne Casavant—to respect her anonymity—a criminologist educated at the University of Montreal. We had a look at the major statistics, compiled by Juristat, that entice us to take stock of the real situation.

Between 1991 and 2004, the crime rate declined by about 22%. Statistics on crime in Canada have been kept since 1962, the year I was born. In the 1960s, 70s and 80s, property crime and offences against the person increased significantly; however, in the 80s and 90s the rate of growth was much slower.

I repeat, between 1991 and 2004 the crime rate in Canada decreased by 22%. I fear that the Conservatives, if left to themselves, will be a decade behind in terms of public policy. Parliamentarians are expected to enact legislation on the basis of probing and conclusive data, and when we hear the Conservatives talk about crime in Canada there is cause for concern.

I say this with complete respect for my Conservative friends. In fact, I would like to believe that I have friends in all political parties—the Liberals, the neo-Bolsheviks, and the Conservatives.

• (1530)

**An hon. member:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Réal Ménard:** I am not asking anyone for a straw vote on this. In any event, I have friends in every party.

Let us look a little more closely at the statistics, including the crime index. Property offences account for 50% of crimes, according to the figures reported by Canada's police services, while violent crimes account for 12%. Certainly there are still too many violent crimes. But it is important to keep things in proportion.

*The Address*

On the question of homicides, for example, I repeat that from 1991 to 2004, the homicide rate fell constantly, except in 2003. In 2003, there was in fact a slight resurgence in homicides. That might suggest that there is a trend. However, I think that it would be very wrong to try to take one year in isolation and call it a trend.

There is another matter of concern. That is the firearms registry. We have to be grateful to all parliamentarians who voted for that registry. This is not a matter of partisanship.

I have examined the statistics for Canadian and American society. First, the United States is the society with the highest rates of incarceration. For every 100,000 people, 723 are imprisoned in the United States. What is the incarceration rate in Canada? It is between 114 and 116 people per 100,000. And yet, even though the United States incarcerates more people than Canada, three times fewer homicides are committed in Canada than in the United States.

Why is this? When we look at serious studies of the issue, we see that it is not so much sentences that deter people from committing offences, but rather the possibility of getting caught and being taken to court.

For that reason, we have to agree with the Conservatives who want a greater police presence in communities and more prevention and programs for young people. That is a kind of discourse we can support. On the other hand, we cannot support the discourse typical of the Republicans, who advocate mandatory minimum sentences in all circumstances, without distinction. That makes no sense. We cannot follow the Conservatives down that road.

As well, if we want to fight crime, we cannot forget that there is a correlation between crime and the poverty rate. In fact, it is significant that the present Prime Minister never once mentioned social housing during the election campaign. The only time he did, it was to announce, like the good Conservative he is, that he intended to offer tax credits for builders. Do we not think that our communities need to have socially affordable housing built?

Three announcements were made in the past on this subject. The former minister, Mr. Gagliano, had announced \$800 million, to which a further \$320 million was added. While that was not enough, nonetheless it was over \$1 billion that made it possible to build some social housing .

I am very worried that the Conservatives want to reduce crime without taking the question of poverty into consideration. In our opinion, Parliament must not join the chorus calling for minimum sentences, but rather must call for generous crime prevention programs and programs to fight crime, while putting heavy emphasis on social housing.

My time is up. I would have had so much more to say, but I do not want to abuse the House's time. I hope that my colleagues, and in particular the member for Outremont, will have questions for me.

• (1535)

[English]

**Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his interesting presentation, but I have a few questions.

First, I heard him brag about la ville de Montréal et la représentation du Bloc à Montréal. It is a beautiful city and we all love it. What about the la ville de Québec? I did not hear him mention the city of Quebec, the oldest city in North America, and boast about Bloc representation for that city.

Furthermore, he made a comment about the white house north. For the information of members, my hon. colleague and I sat together in health committee. I have a lot of respect for the member. However, we already have a white house north. I live in it on Vancouver Island. It is a nice big white summer place. Please come and visit me some time.

I want to comment on the remarks made about statistics on crime. The hon. member said that crime had gone down in Canada. I wonder where he has been. We just had eight people murdered in Ontario. Just a short time ago articles appeared in the newspapers about the biker wars in Montreal. I believe 130 were people murdered in this war between Hell's Angels and the Rock Machine. It was in Montreal. Where were you? Did you forget that, my friend?

What about what is going on—

• (1540)

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. I know you are getting wound up. You are so wound up that you are forgetting not to refer to the hon. member as "you". Perhaps you could refrain from that.

**Mr. James Lunney:** Excuse me, Mr. Speaker, I will try to defer to the Chair.

In terms of what is going on in our country, we are very concerned about crime in my community, and indeed across the country. We have grow ops in our major cities. We have drugs such as crystal meth, which is damaging our young people. We have home invasions and auto theft in Surrey. Vancouver leads all of Canada in property crimes.

In a major study just released, Statistics Canada has indicated that only one in ten sexual assaults is being reported. Only one in three property crimes is being reported. That tells me two things: first, the public's confidence in the criminal justice system is at an all time low; second, the confidence of criminals is at an all time high. It is time we took action.

[Translation]

**Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, first of all, for us it is a continuing privilege to have the presence of the member from Quebec City in our caucus. She is like a guiding light which we follow with unflagging inspiration. Our whip, the member from Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, also comes from the Quebec City region. Our caucus is following them with great inspiration and working very hard to ensure that the presence of the Bloc Québécois will be consolidated in the Quebec City region in the next election.

Now, with all due respect for my colleague, I have to say that our enemy as parliamentarians is prejudice in the form of generalizations. Of course, the members of the Bloc Québécois, like all parliamentarians, have fought against crime most vigorously.

*The Address*

I was the member for Hochelaga—Maisonneuve in 1995 when a car bombing took the life of the young Daniel Desrochers. I was the first member of parliament to introduce a bill on organized crime.

We make the distinction between crime, which is generally down, and legislative measures that we must have as required by the situation, such as when there were confrontations between street gangs around 1995. The reality is that, all offences taken together, crime in Canada is diminishing. Of course, there may be some peaks that we should look at more closely. With the consent of the House, I am prepared to submit the document I received this morning.

Does the House know that last year the rise in offences, or the number of charges laid, was related to the subject of marijuana? That is not surprising. Through you, Mr. Speaker, I will send our colleague the document presented to me this morning. He will see in it that, all trends taken together, crime is not rising in Canada.

In any case, the best way to fight crime is to have generous policies for social programs and those most in need of assistance. Such an approach, of course, requires public funding for social housing, and the Conservative government has been cruelly incapable of providing this.

[*English*]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. Before we resume debate, the last exchange was a good example of what ought not to happen. The first and only intervention took over two and a half to three minutes and the answer was, as a result, just as long.

The idea of the five minute period is that more than just one exchange will take place. I would ask hon. members to keep that in mind the next time they rise, allegedly to ask a question or make a brief comment.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health.

• (1545)

**Mr. Steven Fletcher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, congratulations on your appointment. I will be splitting my time with the member from Nanaimo.

First, I would like to thank my constituents of Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia. This is the first time I have risen in the House since the election. I am honoured to have the opportunity to be their member in the House of Commons, and I look forward to working hard on their behalf.

I am also very pleased to give my full support to the measures contained in the Speech from the Throne.

On January 23 Canadians told us they wanted change and that is exactly what the new government will deliver. We are turning a new leaf in Ottawa, five new leaves, in fact. Unlike the previous government, we understand the importance of priorities, and we have set five.

Without clear priorities, as every Canadian knows, government accomplishes very little. The new government knows what is important. We are putting the interests of everyday Canadians first. We have a plan and we will deliver.

The first priority of our government is to clean up the mess that the previous government left in Ottawa. We will pass the federal

accountability act. We will give Canadians open, accountable and honest government. We will ensure that the sponsorship scandal never happens again.

Canada's new government is going to provide real tax relief for working families. We will cut the GST from 7% to 6% to 5%. Cutting the GST will leave more money in the pockets of every Canadian, no matter their circumstances or their income.

Our third priority is to make our streets and communities safe. The new government will crack down on crime. Our message is simple: "If you do serious crime, you're going to do serious time". We will also attack the root causes of crime so young people do not get into trouble in the first place.

Our fourth priority is to give direct help to parents for the high cost of raising children. Giving \$1,200 in cash to parents of pre-school age children is a good start. We will also create more child care spaces across the country, and we will deliver twice as many dollars for our child care program than the Liberals ever did in 13 years.

Our fifth priority, and this is an area in which I am particularly interested, is we will work with the premiers to establish a patient wait time guarantee. Under the previous government, patient wait times nearly doubled. As the Supreme Court declared, and thousands of Canadian patients know, access to a waiting list is not access to health care. As a result, we are going to ensure that Canadians get the urgent medical help they need when they need it. The guarantee will ensure that if the people cannot get the medical care they need where they live, the public insurance will cover the cost of that care in a location where they can get the service.

We can and will achieve better results for the patients and maintain our universal health care system.

After 13 years of a Liberal government, 1.2 million Canadians do not have family physicians. We will increase our supply of health care professionals by cooperating with the provinces to expand educational programs. We will also work to integrate international medical graduates into our health care system. We will ensure that Canadians get the health care for which they have paid.

I also want to address an issue on which I have worked very hard in the previous Parliament as health critic for the Conservative Party. That is the issue of cancer and, in particular, the Canadian strategy for cancer control.

•(1550)

Cancer is a serious and growing threat to Canadians. Today, the Canadian Cancer Society released its annual cancer statistic. An estimated 153,000 Canadians will be diagnosed with cancer this year and 70,400 will die unnecessarily.

After 13 years of Liberal government, our country still does not have a national cancer strategy, even though during the last 13 years, 1,885,200 Canadians have been diagnosed with cancer and 899,534 have died from this disease.

The Canadian Strategy for Cancer Control has been developed by over 700 cancer survivors and scores of the leading cancer agencies and advocacy groups throughout Canada.

On June 7, 2005, the House, with the support of all the federal parties, supported my motion to fully implement the Canadian Strategy for Cancer Control. The motion also included mental illness, mental health and heart disease. Amazingly the previous Liberal government failed to act.

Canadians deserve better. This new government will provide consistent leadership in fighting cancer and other major diseases.

The Canadian Strategy for Cancer Control is an effective and innovative model that values the work of cancer experts and puts patients first. The previous government lacked the political will to implement it and put bureaucratic red tape before patients.

Canada's new government values the expertise of the cancer community. We will put patients first. We have the political will and we will act on the Canadian Strategy for Cancer Control and fully implement and fund the strategy.

I would like to take a moment to discuss the strategy. The Canadian Strategy for Cancer Control funding will be arm's length to government. The network of experts of the council of the Canadian Strategy for Cancer Control has spent six years developing this and is ready to serve the provinces and territories and Canadians to improve cancer prevention. The strategy will also better manage the patient's journey through the health care system and support those who care for cancer patients, including health care professionals, caregivers and family members.

We will also develop national disease specific strategies for other major illnesses, including mental health and heart disease.

As the official opposition's health critic, I worked hard to further the Canadian Strategy for Cancer Control. Our government will work even harder to implement it.

As Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, I want to advise hon. members present and all Canadians on the government's pandemic preparedness.

Although the timing of a pandemic is unpredictable, experts agree that future influenza pandemics are inevitable. At this time, there is no influenza pandemic anywhere in the world and there seems to be no new risk to human health. However, we need to be vigilant in monitoring the potential of a pandemic threat posed by avian flu and we must be prepared.

### *The Address*

Therefore, the Government of Canada, in collaboration with the provinces and territories, has already developed a pandemic influenza plan to assist jurisdictions in preparing to respond appropriately when a pandemic hits. The plan will be augmented and improved in the near future.

We are one of the few countries to have in place a contract for pandemic vaccine production. We have plans to develop a prototype vaccine against the H5N1 influenza strain. We have created a national antiviral stockpile for use against such a pandemic. We are also providing national and international leadership and we will continue to do so.

Canadians have told us that they want change, and this government intends to deliver.

Again, I would like to thank my constituents for re-electing me.

•(1555)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Brian Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the parliamentary secretary for his remarks.

[*English*]

I would like to thank the hon. member for his thought provoking and thoughtful speech.

I have three short points. One deals with change that Canadians purportedly voted for. In my riding, the Beausejour Medical Research Institute carries on important cancer research. It has just learned that its funding under the ACOA umbrella has been cut. It will be limited in the amount of research it can do in finding breakthroughs or cancer cures.

I would ask the parliamentary secretary to perhaps look into that at some point. I do not require an answer immediately. I appreciate his candour and sincerity on the issue.

On wait times in general, we have great concern on this side that this will mean that someone has to get in a station wagon and drive from Albert County to Moncton and be flown to Toronto. Is there a plan on what is a limit on the amount of travel that is acceptable to get people who are in need to centres of excellence?

Finally, as a former member of a council and a mayor, we grappled at the local level with the West Nile virus when we turned our thoughts and words to public health. That was a very pressing issue and continues to be. What was very frustrating at the municipal level and perhaps even at the provincial level was the lack of a pan-Canadian resolution or battleground for these pandemics.

I welcome the member's words when he says that when it comes to the flu pandemic, we predict there might be a pan-Canadian approach to the pandemic. I also ask him to turn to some of the other national problems such as West Nile virus.

*The Address*

**Mr. Steven Fletcher:** Mr. Speaker, the member may be interested to know that through CIHR the Government of Canada provides over \$105 million each year for cancer research. However, I will investigate the specific issue the member raises. On the issue of West Nile virus, as a Manitoban I am quite familiar with mosquitoes and share his views in that regard.

On the most important issue the member raised, which was dealing with wait time guarantees and the necessity in some cases to transport patients to a location where the health care is provided, first of all, the distance is not as important as ensuring that patients get the care they need when they need it.

If it means that we have to send someone from Halifax to Vancouver or vice versa, I guess that is what we would have to do. However, the long term solution is to increase the number of health care professionals that we have in the system, to create centres of excellence, and ensure that there is as much capacity as possible in the local areas. Over time we believe that it can be achieved in most cases.

I think the member will share with me the hope and will that people who are sick would get the care that they deserve when they need it and the government is committed to that goal.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I will be brief. First, I would like to congratulate you on being re-elected to this House and to the position you now hold.

My hon. colleague is very concerned about health, as we saw during the last session. As I will be the Bloc Québécois critic for Indian affairs and northern development, I am enormously concerned about aboriginal health.

Will Health Canada and the Department of Indian Affairs reach an agreement or share responsibility in order to balance the issue of health with social development, which is part of Indian Affairs' mandate?

Will funds be transferred so that the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development can appropriately address the issue of aboriginal health, because it is a critical problem, as we will see in the coming weeks and months?

• (1600)

[*English*]

**Mr. Steven Fletcher:** Mr. Speaker, the issue of aboriginal health is absolutely critical. Many Canadians may not realize that the federal government is actually the fifth largest provider of health care services, largely due to the aboriginal community. It also provides services to the RCMP and the military, of course.

The federal government has an absolutely critical role to play in aboriginal health. It will be working with aboriginal stakeholders, health care professionals and aboriginal families to ensure that aboriginal health improves.

I think the member will agree with me that after the last 13 years we have seen a substantial decrease in the quality of life of aboriginal peoples. We have seen an increase in diabetes rates and so on. The government will work with anyone who shares its goal of improving aboriginal health. It also has to look at other social

impacts, the precursors for health and preventive measures, and improve the social environment that aboriginal peoples find themselves in.

**Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, let me congratulate you on your appointment and the Speaker himself on his election. We look forward to working with you, with him and with the other Chair occupants to see this House progress for the time that it exists.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the electors of Nanaimo—Alberni for returning me. I was first elected in 2000. It is hard to believe we have had three elections in five years, but it seems to be the nature of our existence lately that we repeatedly and at short terms have to go back to our supporters and ask for our jobs to be extended. However, that is the nature of democracy in our country. We are hoping that we will make this House last a substantial time, so we can get some work done. I look forward to working with all colleagues.

I am grateful for the opportunity to respond to the Speech from the Throne on behalf of the voters of Nanaimo—Alberni. During the campaign, the Conservative Party presented five priorities and now we have a throne speech which focuses on those five priorities.

I know there has been criticism of the fact that this throne speech did not address 147 or 187 priorities, that everything we could imagine in this country might be listed in the throne speech as a priority, but we have heard that kind of throne speech before. I have been here and have sat through several of them and frankly, what Canadians have heard in this throne speech is a focused message.

It is focused on our first five priorities that we campaigned on and priorities that we intend to deliver on with this new Conservative government. We look for the cooperation of all members in helping us move in this direction.

The first priority of course is the federal accountability act and I am pleased to stand today, April 11, on the day that this act has been tabled. It is a comprehensive act. It is a thick, weighty issue, as members realized today when this document of about 200 pages arrived for us to examine in detail. I know all members will be digging into it over these next few days, so when we return after the break, we will be able to debate the minute details of this very important act.

This act will change the culture in Ottawa for a long time to come. It will change it in a manner that we believe will help to restore the confidence of the Canadian people in their parliamentary democracy.

I am very pleased to stand on this day and talk about this. We have had a lot of discussion already about the elements of the act. I personally am glad that we will see some very strong whistleblower protection. It is something we have advocated for a long time.

I am glad there will be a limitation of government members and ministers coming back to lobby their own departments and senior officials. That has been a culture in this place that obviously has led to problems and we want to see that curtailed. It will be curtailed.

*The Address*

The reduction of money into political campaigns and big money playing an influence is going to change the dynamics of federal politics. This called the House of Commons, and the act will give the common people a chance to express the views from their communities and to participate in a democratic manner more effectively in the future.

We will be moving on safe communities. We have heard some discussion. Just briefly, I know the member for Hochelaga talked about the criminal justice changes that are advocated as part of our agenda in the throne speech. I had a short intervention with him because I am concerned about crime in our country.

I am concerned that we still have criminal organizations existing such as Hell's Angels and the other motorcycle gangs that run organized crime. I am concerned about grow ops that are devaluing property and endangering our neighbourhoods. They tamper with electricity. They steal hydro from our communities. They put firemen and police officers at risk and the profits go to organized crime. I am concerned that we have not taken action. It is time that this House took action to make our communities safe.

I am concerned about my own community. Nanaimo is a town of 82,000 people and I represent the larger half of that community. I am concerned when a 92 year old man is beaten in a home invasion, trying to protect his 85 year old wife. She called 911 when she saw the face in the window of a fellow who used to live next door, but before the police could arrive, this 37 year old kicked in the door and beat a 92 year old constituent until he was hardly recognizable and threatened to cut off his wife's fingers for her rings.

• (1605)

I am concerned about seniors in our community being able to live. Many of them have earned the right to live independently and I think it is wrong that we are not protecting them, encouraging them and giving them the opportunity to live out their years in their own homes as long as possible.

I was concerned when another man, who was 82, came to see me during the election at my campaign office. His window had been broken twice in a few weeks and he was wondering what he had to do to protect his home from young people throwing rocks at it. Sometimes he sits up at night in the dark, looking out the window to see if he can catch them. He was wondering if he needs to get a baseball bat, wondering what he needs to do to protect his home.

I am concerned for elderly people in our communities. There are a lot of elderly people in the residential communities on Vancouver Island. It is a choice place for seniors to retire to, but crime and violence are threatening our seniors.

I am concerned about young people who are beaten in swarmings. During the election, a woman ran up to my car as I was backing out of my favourite morning stop at Tim Hortons, that national Canadian institution. While I was backing out and trying to phone my campaign manager, there was a lady knocking on the window of my car. She had in her hand a picture of her son, 20 years old, a student at Simon Fraser University.

It was not her favourite picture. It was a picture of the young man with his head shaved. He has a steel plate in his head because he and a few friends were swarmed by a large group of 15 year olds and 16

year olds while walking down the street in Vancouver. It was an unprovoked attack over a minor exchange of words. It was simply over some little thing they do that I think is called "cripping", where they knock their knuckles, I guess. These kids did not have time to participate, so they were attacked. He was hit in the head with a rock and has a steel plate in his head. This one, I think, is going to be okay and I thank God. I am glad he is going to be okay, but this is not right.

I take exception to the member for Hochelaga and others who say that crime is coming down, because that is not what we see. We see home invasions and car thefts in Vancouver. Breaking and entering is the leading crime in North America, and I think Surrey is second to Miami for car theft.

The statistics have changed because many of the crimes are not being reported. I mentioned earlier that only one in 10 sexual assaults is even being reported and only one in three property crimes is reported. As I mentioned earlier, I believe this indicates that Canadians' confidence in their justice system is at an all time low and criminals' confidence is at an all time high. It is time that changed.

The measures we are introducing will not alone be sufficient, but we will deal seriously with mandatory sentences for repeat and violent offenders and also for predators, which is something I would push for. I hope there are aggravated offences clauses for offenders who involve young people and seniors in their crimes. We will want to scrutinize that act and I hope there will be measures for those who attack our most vulnerable and put their lives and their existence in this country at peril.

I am concerned. I am concerned about youth violence in Parksville and Qualicum. I have already mentioned some of the other things such as organized crime in Surrey. We will be debating these issues and mandatory sentences in due course.

We will also be delivering on our child care agenda. That will put \$1,200 per year, or \$100 per month for every child under age six, into the hands of those who are charged with the responsibility of raising children. We will create about 125,000 day care spaces. That is more than the previous administration delivered in years. I would say that there has probably been more than a decade of the Liberals promising child care, but they actually did not produce any.

For all of the Liberals' protests about the type of child care being offered, I want to say this. We will be delivering on our promises to give Canadians choice in child care.

We will be moving to reduce wait times. I am hoping that the government will take into consideration on the health care file not only a wait times guarantee but will also begin to move, as the parliamentary secretary mentioned just moments ago, toward disease prevention and wellness promotion strategies. We cannot afford to miss opportunities to advance the treatment of disease. Every stone needs to be overturned.

*The Address*

I have some concerns about mental illness, which was alluded to earlier. It is an increasing problem. I have concerns with the way Health Canada has obstructed advances in that realm. Members who have been here previously will know that we fought for a company producing a vitamin mineral product in Alberta that was helping people with mental illness. It was obstructed by Health Canada on technicalities. That is going forward, thank goodness. There is hope for people with mental illness. It is based on very simple treatment strategies.

● (1610)

I am also hopeful that for cancer we will advance everything, including intravenous vitamin C, which is being researched right now at McGill University, I am glad to say. It is a low cost intervention that shows great promise.

I welcome questions from my colleagues.

**Hon. Shawn Murphy (Charlottetown, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to probe a little deeper into one issue mentioned by the hon. member for Nanaimo—Alberni. That is the issue of child care. I am following this debate as closely as I can, but there are certain aspects that I do not quite understand.

I think all of us in the House agree that early childhood intervention is important to a child's development, both cognitively and behaviourally. It sets the right trajectory academically and later in life and I think is a wise investment for government. I am not as naive to suggest that the Liberal plan is perfect, but it does take great steps on the hodgepodge of plans that exist across Canada.

As for the other plan, the \$1,200, I see it as being an income support and I see it being very welcome in most families, especially in the lower and middle income families. I have listened to everything that has been said, but I fail to see how that \$1,200 has anything to do with child care.

I will give the House an example. The child tax benefit and the child tax supplement have been around for about 10 years. They give about \$3,000 to low income and medium income families with children, but I have never heard any parliamentarian or expert or anyone at all refer to that income support as child care. Why are we referring to this as child care? My question for the member is, how does this payment—and again, it is a welcome income support payment—have anything to do with the issue of child care?

**Mr. James Lunney:** Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that whenever Canadians are asked about their priorities in child care and who they would like to have raise their children, they say they would prefer to be able to do it themselves, with their spouse.

The type of institutional child care that was proposed by the previous government was actually the fifth choice of most parents. While some provinces did indeed sign on to a program to provide institutional care, most parents would prefer that one or the other of them look after their children. They work hard trying to juggle one family member or another to look after the children. Sometimes they rely on older kids to help with the young ones. Sometimes they rely on grandparents or a maiden aunt or someone else. That is who they prefer to have doing it.

Parents struggle for their children. They invest in their children. I believe that what we are doing in supporting parents with their own choice is a better option than institutional care for young children.

Furthermore, my wife is a counsellor in the school system and is reading a book right now that I find very interesting. It is written by a psychologist and a medical doctor who talk about how important the early years are for children in bonding with their parents. This is a time when young children should be bonding with their own parents so that when the parents impose their will on them, they respect it and obey their parents. If this bonding does not take place, frankly, the children are at a much higher risk of rebelling and having what psychologists call “counter-will”, which causes all kinds of problems later on with delinquency.

● (1615)

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Vivian Barbot (Papineau, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Nanaimo—Alberni for his concern about violence. I too am very concerned by this issue.

I think it is worrisome that no weight is given to statistics. Statistics are tallied according to set rules. What is true today was true yesterday, in other words, not all crimes have been reported at all times.

Although I share this general concern about violence, I am worried about something else even more. I am worried about the presence of young people, especially young black men, in Montreal and Canadian prisons—when their only crime was being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

We should put more emphasis on prevention. That way we would be paying attention to these young people, who are often the victims of discrimination, victims of racism, and victims of racial profiling. In any measures we might implement for preventing violence, particular emphasis should be placed on those who are ostracized simply because they belong to a cultural minority.

I would like to know what my colleague has to say about this. What does he plan to do? What does he propose for helping these young people?

[*English*]

**Mr. James Lunney:** Mr. Speaker, of course prevention is on our minds. We want to do everything we can to prevent youth from moving into a life of crime. However, these programs alone are not sufficient. If we do not demonstrate consequences, all the programs in the world will fail, in essence, as far as I am concerned. Frankly, this is just not working.

We have restorative justice in our community, but frankly, once people have opted for restorative justice, which avoids the court system, they cannot be brought back to court. According to police officers who speak to me, when the kids in our community are offered restorative justice, as soon as the decision is made they just blow it off, laugh about it and do not follow through because they cannot be brought back to court.

*The Address*

It is a very serious problem with youth crime. We have to bring in consequences for repeat and violent offenders, not for every kid. We have to do everything we can to prevent crime, but we also must have consequences.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Jean Lapierre (Outremont, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, first I would like to say that I wish to share my time with the member for Thunder Bay—Rainy River.

This being my first opportunity to speak in the House as the re-elected member for Outremont, I too would like to thank my constituents for the confidence they have again shown in me. I would like to tell them that I intend to serve and work as hard as possible on the matters entrusted to us that are of interest to them.

Let us look, for starters, at this government's first move, which was the Speech from the Throne. There is no need to go into it in great detail because it is quite thin. Let us go over what was in it. First they talked about a 1% reduction in the GST. No one can say he or she is opposed to tax cuts. Everyone knows, though, that an income tax cut would be much better. It is nice to reduce a tax by 1%, and it is even very generous for people buying a Mercedes. But it amounts to far less money for people who do not earn a lot.

In this sense, the GST is a regressive tax, and this is clearly a regressive tax cut. That is why we, the Liberals, have always preferred real income tax cuts. In fact, some income tax cuts were announced and approved last November. We hope that the government will not be so obnoxious as to increase Canadians' taxes when its representatives talk constantly about doing exactly the opposite.

There is also the taxable family allowance of \$1,200. How can one be against a family allowance? We should not have to choose, though, between a family allowance and accessible child care. They cannot possibly persuade me that with this \$1,200 a year, they are giving Canadian families a choice. That amounts to \$100 a month. With income tax deducted, not much is left. The result is that people in this country, outside Quebec, cannot afford child care.

The Conservatives certainly do not lean in the direction of accessible child care. I heard the member who spoke just before me saying everything bad that he could about child care. I found it rather embarrassing.

However that may be, the \$1,200 allowance is a good thing, but they should not try to tell us that it will provide access to a national child care program.

The Government of Quebec has some \$800 million or \$900 million at stake in the cancellation of the national day care program. I can not wait to see what happens and how the government will compensate for something already established by contract by the Government of Canada. I imagine that the signature of the government, whichever it may be, is worth something. That is why we must be on the watch in the coming weeks.

In criminal justice terms, the Conservatives are known to strongly favour punishment. If we listened to them, we would fill all of the world's prisons and be building others. They do not seem to have a lot of faith in rehabilitation and do not seem to believe in a second

chance. I do not share their opinion. Accordingly, we will examine the bills they introduce, which run the risk of being on the far right. We can assess them as they come along.

The throne speech talks of accountability. No one can oppose virtue and motherhood. However, we have to look at the details of this bill to be sure we are not bringing the machinery of state to a halt. I have no objection to additional audits. However, the pendulum must not be allowed to swing so far as to hit the opposite wall. In the coming weeks, the members will be able to examine the proposed accountability measures.

As for wait times for health care, the government has produced nothing new. It was part of our platform and our government's action. The provincial governments have the very same concern.

This throne speech is very thin especially since the real challenges facing us as Canadians and particularly as Quebecers are much more economic in nature. There was absolutely no mention of the economy in this speech. It has to be said that the government has inherited an enviable situation along with a healthy economy and solid public finances.

• (1620)

However, we should take nothing for granted. We need to diversify our economic base. There are sectors that are suffering greatly at the present time.

I do not need to tell the House about the furniture sector, which is currently in distress. There is also the textile sector, the apparel sector, in Montreal, for example. Quebec used to have 66,000 jobs in that sector; now it has about 25,000, and there is talk of more closures to come.

Then there is sporting equipment, and forestry as well. On December 17 of last year, the Prime Minister made a formal commitment to the forestry industry, a commitment to:

Use the repayment of illegally collected American tariffs as security for loan guarantees to affected lumber companies and ensure adequate support for displaced forest workers and their communities.

This was announced on December 17, but we find nothing at all in the throne speech. Yet that sector is going through some very hard times. There are individuals who are suffering immensely. There are elderly workers who see no future, who are reaching the end of their employment insurance and whose only prospect is welfare. As a result, those workers are going to lose their dignity. They need support. There is absolutely nothing about this in this throne speech.

I do not want to speak again about sponsorships—heaven forbid. However certain major events which have had government support in the past need to maintain that support, because they have major economic impact on specific regions, on Quebec and on Canada. Of course we have to find something to help them out.

*The Address*

I note a total silence on the aerospace industry. If we are talking about sectors of the future, where is the aerospace policy? God knows it is a field where we can be competitive, where we can be world leaders. Yet all that this government is trying to do is to discredit the Technology Partnerships Canada program, the only program that has enabled Canada to rank among the world leaders in aerospace. We do not have a wealth of sectors in which we can boast of being among the leaders. In short, a lot of things were left out of this speech.

With regard to the trade challenge, particularly with the United States, the whole issue of the trade corridor is absent. Worse still, at his first meeting the U.S. president, the Prime Minister gave in to the Americans' demand. We will need a passport or special identity card to cross the border, and that is going to have a huge impact on the flow of people and goods. There is nothing at all about this in the speech.

I should also mention infrastructure. God knows there are serious infrastructure needs in Canada. We have aging infrastructure that needs a lot of investment. The government has not said a word about this.

This Parliament may not last long, but one thing is certain: the government cannot be so simplistic. The dynamics of life in Canada are much more complex than the government's five priorities. You cannot govern on the basis of one small part of what is going on in the country. You cannot govern by totally ignoring the economy. This is what I find most unfortunate about the Speech from the Throne.

Over the coming weeks and months, we will be keeping the government informed about the concerns of various sectors of the economy. We hope that the Speech from the Throne was just an aperitif. Certainly a few little olives cannot be considered an appetizer, let alone the main course, or we might as well say that Canada will not be governed at all. We might even be led to believe that the federal government does not care about its citizens' daily preoccupations.

We can start with these five little kernels, and we will look forward to the rest when the main course is served. That said, we look forward with great interest to the bills that will be proposed in these areas.

• (1625)

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to ask the member a few questions.

The member is right, the Speech from the Throne lacks ideas. It was a very short speech that included only a few things of interest to Canadians.

But what is the difference between a Speech from the Throne that lacks ideas and one that is full of ideas and words that do not translate into action on the part of a government that breaks its promises and fails to act in the best interest of the majority of Canadians?

• (1630)

[English]

We are dealing with a fairly major contradiction in terms of the member, who was a minister in the former government, and I think we need to focus our remarks on that contradiction. As previous Liberals have suggested in the Speech from the Throne debate, all is well because the Liberal government created this robust economy where all Canadians are doing well and all we have to do is build on this tradition. The Liberals seem to forget or ignore the fact that for many years they undercut the lives of ordinary Canadians and made it more difficult for working families to make a go of it, to look after the needs of their families and to ensure they can contribute their fullest to our economy.

The member has carefully ignored the fact that for many Canadians there is no hope of stable, permanent, long term paid employment.

The member has carefully ignored the fact that many in our society, particularly women, must work in part time jobs for which there are very few benefits, low wages and all kinds of difficulties in terms of juggling work and family responsibilities.

The member has carefully ignored the significant number of Canadians who live in poverty.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Is there a question coming? We have heard the member speak before and we would like there to be a question and answer period for this member.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I have asked hon. members to keep their questions and comments brief. It is not just a time for questions, it is also a time for comments. However it would be in the best interest of there being a variety of exchanges if members kept their comments to a period of time shorter than what the hon. member has already taken up.

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the words of advice and I will certainly try to get to the question which I have put in the context of a growing number of serious economic and social ills in the country today and the hardships facing working families. Those are challenges for the new government but they are challenges that were created by the past government because of 12 years of neglect.

I think it is important for the member to tell the House today how he intends to make compensation for the deplorable record of the Liberal government and to tell Canadians how he is prepared to work with us to ensure that everyone in our society is able to contribute to his or her fullest ability. All working families should have the time to spend together, to contribute to the economy and to enjoy life.

*The Address*

[Translation]

**Hon. Jean Lapierre (Outremont, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member for Winnipeg North does not realize just how proud the outgoing Liberal government can be of its record. We now have the lowest unemployment rate in 32 years. We have a generation that does not even know the word "recession". We have the lowest interest rates in decades, which means that young families can dream of buying property. Statistics show that poverty is in decline. Better yet, our public finances are the envy of the whole world. Canada's economic record was the envy of all G-7 countries during the former Prime Minister's mandate, particularly during his tenure as Minister of Finance. Therefore, I fail to understand the member's defeatist attitude. The current government is blessed indeed to have us as its predecessors.

[English]

**Mr. Ken Boshcoff (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Speech from the Throne is a means of communication to tell Canadians what the government program is for the coming term. It should let us know what priority plans and programs the government has in store. It is a way of benchmarking election promises.

What is not in the speech makes people question where and when their personal concerns and issues will be addressed. By leaving out critical elements, the government leaves open to speculation as to what its real agenda may be.

When a minister of the Crown advises the House that the new government is not bound by any previous legal agreements such as those signed for child care, there will be legitimate concern about what else could be dismissed.

In that right I would like to ask the minister of culture to reinstate and restore full funding for the encounters with Canada program. This program is a valuable learning experience for young Canadians from sea to sea to sea.

Hopefully in the same manner the Minister of the Environment will see fit to restore the one tonne challenge and the climate action network which allowed individuals, groups and communities to actively involve themselves in environmental awareness initiatives.

I also trust that the Minister of Agriculture will honour the legacy fund as endorsed by the Canadian Cattlemen's Association which will help regain our export position for beef products.

As chair of the Liberal rural caucus, I have been advised that although CAIS has been beneficial in many situations, it needs thoughtful revamping rather than outright dismissal. Further, it is clear that a new and separate disaster relief program is a necessary component to accompany any such amended agriculture bill.

Conspicuous in its absence is any mention of support for tourism. When the Prime Minister rolled over to President Bush and abandoned the efforts of all those lobbying against an American imposed passport system, was he ignoring the billions of dollars to be lost in tourism? Will the budget address this?

For softwood lumber, based on the facts that all parties campaigned on platforms similar to the November Liberal plan and that \$1.5 billion is booked and available for support, it is

difficult to understand why the government will not free up this money immediately for those companies in such desperate need.

Weekly plant closures are occurring across the country and thousands of manufacturing jobs are being lost in my riding alone. Why will the government not help? Is it punishing the resource based communities of Canada? The question would be, why? If not, then why not use the available money today? These workers and communities cannot wait for George Bush to tell the Prime Minister when to speak up. The need is well beyond urgent.

The same situation applies to child care. In Ontario the agreement allowed the province to very generously upload child care services from municipalities, to the considerable relief of property taxpayers. With the cut and run policy of the new government, Ontario will not be able to open up a single new space. Tell that to the people who were hoping that this would have helped them break out of a cycle of dependency. In four years the burden of child care will return to municipalities, which will then have to raise property taxes to pay for these programs.

Further, the municipalities of my riding of Thunder Bay—Rainy River and indeed all of Canada, and Ontario especially, are awaiting the release of the infrastructure funding which was already in the budget. I am talking about phase two for those who may know those technical terms. In Ontario it is known as COMRIF. In mid-December, those who were eligible were supposed to receive notice of this federal assistance. Municipal budgets are being finalized across the country and still there is no word on this program and there was nothing in the throne speech. This is unconscionable. Four months of waiting makes it extraordinarily difficult for communities to put their budgets together.

Nationally the Canadian strategic infrastructure fund for larger cities is just about out of money. The throne speech forgot about these economic engines of national significance.

•(1635)

My question is very straightforward and it does not matter who answers. Will the Canadian strategic infrastructure fund be renewed, or has it been replaced by the borders initiative, for example? Whether it is the Minister of Finance, the Prime Minister or the minister responsible for communities, I know that municipalities and communities all across Canada are waiting for a very clear and definitive answer.

Yesterday in the Senate the question was asked and no answer was forthcoming. This issue is foremost in the minds of Canadian municipalities as it will drastically alter major infrastructure renewal plans.

I am asking the government to please not set back support for municipalities. The annual Liberal GST rebate of \$700 million and the gas tax rebate of \$5 billion over five years were promised to be permanent. Will the government at least confirm to Canada's municipalities that these revenue sources will be honoured?

*The Address*

Also, for the people of my riding of Thunder Bay—Rainy River, I am asking if there are any plans for a buy Canada component in any federal funding assistance for public transportation infrastructure. Many members may be aware that the City of Ottawa recently awarded its light rail transit contract to China, taking all that technology, expertise and the possibility of developing it in our national capital away from our own country. This of course is very serious for my home community and my riding, but it also has implications for Ontario and indeed the entire country.

All of these things put together I believe are valid questions. Most of them actually have not been raised in this forum throughout the throne speech and I am pleased to have had the opportunity to do so. The goal in adopting a buy Canada program would be to ensure that public funds are used to support domestic market and suppliers, and young people who want to stay in smaller communities such as Thunder Bay.

Overall, when we think about what the throne speech means to Canadians, they look to it as a guideline, some form of saying that this is what the Conservatives said they were going to do and this is what they will do and in what timeframe.

When we examine all of these things, whether it be support for young people's programs, support for child care, support for a buy Canada program to develop transit technology to help people get to places quicker and cleaner, all of these things put together amount to concern about what is not in the budget.

What is of particular concern to Liberals is the fact that money is available for softwood lumber. It was booked. Everyone in this House agrees that the forest products companies are in dire straits. Please, if we could do one thing before Easter, it would be to free up this money and help those companies, those workers and those communities.

● (1640)

**Mr. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague provided a lot of information on a lot of things that are obviously issues for him and I am certain for other members of this House and their constituents.

He did mention that we should be talking about a priority in our plans and programs and linking them to election promises and to the throne speech. I would point out to the hon. member that throughout the campaign we did talk about the five priorities that we laid out in the throne speech.

To be sure, there is an awful lot left to do, perhaps because through overwork or whatever some things have been left undone for the past dozen years or so. It is like trying to eat an elephant. Of course, it cannot be done in one bite. It will take a little while. We are biting off five chunks of the elephant first. We are working on other chunks of the elephant as we go along. We are going to need help from members on all sides of the House.

Is the member willing to work with the Government of Canada to pass the accountability act quickly? In doing that, we could get on with doing business in this place and in Ottawa the way business ought to be done in a more accountable, open and ethical manner, so we can get on with the issues that he rightly brings up as being

important to himself and I am sure to other members of the House and to other people in Canada.

● (1645)

**Mr. Ken Boshcoff:** Mr. Speaker, I have always been in favour of increased accountability, ever since my earliest days as a councillor, as a mayor and as a member of Parliament, so I have no problem with that.

My questions though were very straightforward. Will the government help the softwood industry now? The help was needed yesterday. Can we honour agreements that were made in good faith with other territories and provinces?

The member has asked me if I support a particular aspect of a government program. Just because I am in opposition I am not going to take a position that is contrary for its own sake. I have only had a chance to read it very briefly but there are a lot of very positive things and I will support them.

I am asking also for a bit of reason in terms of some of these things. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities is absolutely frantic to know what is going to happen to some of the infrastructure programs. The smaller municipalities in my riding are very desperate because they cannot finish their budgets for this coming term.

I do not think my questions were unreasonable in terms of asking the government to honour those commitments. Even if we just did two before Easter, perhaps we could save the forest products industry by Holy Thursday. With that announcement, the minister would make most of the country very happy. Perhaps we could also have a definitive response regarding municipalities and future funding. To his credit, the Prime Minister has actually put in writing that the GST rebate would not be removed, so full marks there. Just keep going, check off the other three or four and we will be doing well.

**Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, one thing comes to mind as I listen to the Liberals talking about the Speech from the Throne. I agree there are glaring oversights in the Speech from the Throne in addressing certain things, but we cannot get past the fact that the Liberals had 13 years to address some of these oversights.

The one thing I want to question the member about is the issue of offshore tax havens. This is top of mind for me and for people in my riding. I have been reading about it lately. The figures are that we are losing between \$7 billion and \$12 billion a year, depending on the source, to offshore tax havens. The technical term is tax motivated expatriation. That is a nice way of saying sleazy, tax cheating loopholes, where a dummy company is set up in Barbados and profits are flowed through there to avoid paying Canadian taxes.

Why did the member's government, when it had the opportunity, not plug those loopholes? Does he believe that the Conservative government, in the interest of fairness, should do so now?

*The Address*

**Mr. Ken Boshcoff:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for giving me a chance to represent the previous Liberal government, which inherited an astonishing deficit and debt. Over that 12 year period, we think of the remarkable progress that was made and that last year, we had enough money to fund a child care program that was national in scope.

I do not know the answer to your particular question. When we think about what this forum is, I appreciate that you were listening to the concerns that I had. I would be more than pleased to respond to any particular questions that you have about my concerns, which I will reiterate and which I am sure that the member, as a Manitoban, also shares. They are issues relating to the CAIS program and disaster relief for agriculture. I talked about softwood lumber. Child care has to be one of your prime concerns. When we talk about municipalities, your municipality is a direct beneficiary of the Liberal government's support for communities such as Winnipeg. Major programs in infrastructure were allocated over the past couple of years. You would think you would be patting us on the back for all that support, because your riding is also a direct beneficiary of that, if I am correct in my geography.

When you add all those things up, I will just thank you for the past 12 years of support.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Before I proceed to the next speaker, I would just remind hon. members again. The member who just spoke many times referred to the member for Winnipeg Centre as "you". We are not supposed to be using the second person here. We are supposed to be using the third person. I hesitated to interrupt him, but I have corrected a number of members on this same thing all afternoon. Particularly members who have been here before should know better. I know that we slip up from time to time, but I did not want to let the hon. member for Thunder Bay—Rainy River get away without knowing that I had noticed what was going on.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Edmonton Centre.

•(1650)

**Mr. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre.

It is a pleasure to stand in the House and comment on the Speech from the Throne. On January 23, Canadians voted for change because they knew that change was long overdue. Change is what we will deliver and it will be positive change.

Canada's new Conservative government will be turning a new leaf, several new leaves in fact. We will deliver change in the way we do business in Ottawa and that will be by making government more open and accountable. We will deliver change in the tax that Canadians pay so they can keep more of their income to pay for the necessities of life.

[*Translation*]

There will be changes in the way we ensure the safety of our cities and neighbourhoods, and changes in the help we provide to Canadian families so that they can strike a better balance between their professional responsibilities and their family responsibilities.

[*English*]

Finally, we will look after Canadians by ensuring that they get the medical attention they need when they need it.

Those are the first five leaves that we will turn as we nurture a new tree of Canadian prosperity and security that will indeed grow strong and tall. I would like to address four briefly and spend a bit more time on one.

As the House knows, our first order of business is the federal accountability act.

[*Translation*]

Our objective, our commitment to Canadians and to Parliament, is to increase efficiency and responsibility within government. This set of measures will directly target some persistent problems. We will increase public confidence in the integrity of the political process by tightening the legislation on political financing and lobbying.

[*English*]

Most Canadians believe that they pay too much tax and we agree with them. We will leave more disposable money in every Canadian's pocket by reducing the GST from 7% to 6% in the short term and to 5% later on. This will help every Canadian, whether they are buying a pack of gum, a piano or a Pontiac.

[*Translation*]

Nothing is more important for a government than protecting its citizens. For a long time, quality of life in Canada has been characterized by safe cities and suburbs and low crime rates. Recently, some criminal trends and activities have diminished the sense of safety and security of Canadians at home and in their towns and neighbourhoods.

[*English*]

That is simply not acceptable to Canadians, and their Conservative government will tackle crime and stand up for safe streets. Criminals have the idea that they will not be caught and that even if they do get caught they will not be punished.

People like to talk about deterrents to crime and addressing the underlying causes of crime. I do not disagree at all that we need to focus more effort on early stage criminal behaviour before it has a chance to take root. However to me one of the strongest deterrents to crime is the assurance that perpetrators will be caught and that they will be punished befitting the crime once they are caught. Our government will work toward that goal by putting thousands more police officers on our streets and by tightening up sentencing provisions. We will also continually put the rights of the victim ahead of the rights of the criminal.

All Canadian families are different and parents deserve to be able to make their own choices in raising their families. Our government will give them that choice by providing an annual allowance of \$1,200 for each child under six years of age, as well as incentives amounting to \$1.25 billion over five years to develop child care spaces. While some may say that this is not enough, it is at least truly universal, unlike the previous government's proposal that would reach less than one-quarter of Canadian children.

*The Address*

Canadians want a government that they can trust to be sure and, as I have already said, we will deliver that. I also believe that Canadians want a government that trusts them and, frankly, I trust my children to raise my grandchildren.

I would like to spend a bit more time talking about what is the first priority for many Canadians and that is health care. I would like to tell the House a short story about the letter C. C stands for Croatia, Colombia and Canada. If I asked anyone which of those countries has the best health care system, I am guessing that everyone would say Canada. In many ways they would be correct but not when it comes to the time spent in pain waiting for long health care queues to meander toward a treatment date.

In the course of knocking on 40,000 doors over the past three years, I met a lady from Croatia and another from Colombia. Both had dual citizenship and both were living in Edmonton. The lady from Croatia had needed a knee replacement and was told that it would take up to two years in Alberta. She went back to Croatia and came back to Canada two months later with her new knee in great shape. The lady from Colombia had a heart condition that would not even have been diagnosed in Alberta for at least two months. She went back to Colombia and had it dealt with in less than two weeks.

My own sister in Victoria had to wait for two years for a knee replacement. In that time she lost almost all mobility, could only work part time and was in constant pain. By the time she received her new knee, her foot on that side and the other knee were badly affected by the constant compensation. Now she is waiting for her second knee. This is a woman who is highly educated and highly motivated but she will never have the quality of life or productivity that she deserves.

Thousands of Canadians are in similar situations and damage as a result from extended wait times simply must be addressed.

• (1655)

[*Translation*]

The government will work together with the provinces and territories to establish guaranteed wait times for patients who need essential medical services. If people cannot obtain in their own region, in the public system, the medical care they need within the time-frame of the established benchmarks, they can seek that care elsewhere and the cost of that care will be covered by the public system. That is guaranteed.

[*English*]

That seemed to work okay for the leader of the NDP a while back.

Canadians, through their governments, have already made significant investments in the system. Five and a half billion dollars has been earmarked specifically to reduce wait times. That is good but much more needs to be done and it does not simply involve money.

Innovation will be critical to ensure that health care remains timely and sustainable. Alberta has run a very successful trial program that saw a 90% drop in wait times for hip and knee replacements. This clearly demonstrates that dramatic patient centred innovation is achievable within our current public system.

Quebec has recently proposed its own care guarantee for select services and was the first province to do so. Our government welcomes this type of leadership and we encourage all provinces to look at Quebec's innovative approach.

Both Alberta and Quebec are showing that it is possible to innovate within the public system and respond to the needs of Canadians.

Our government welcomes such innovations across the country but these innovations must be consistent with the principles of a universally accessible and equitable health care system. The key to success is to be ready to work with the provinces and territories, give them the tools they need and then get out of their way while continuing to monitor compliance with the Canada Health Act.

There are many other areas that our government will be addressing over time but it is those five priorities that we will use to earn the trust of Canadians. It will be a long and winding road but we have the team, we have the leadership and we have the determination to straighten out the curves and to reach our destination.

**Mr. Brian Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I just want to pick up on the justice aspects, the prime aspects.

It is important to have a debate in the House and at committee level about the effectiveness or the efficacy of mandatory sentences, of seemingly wanting to be tougher on crime by imposing longer sentences and putting criminals away longer and all those sorts of things. However, empirical evidence shows, and one of the members referred to this morning, that these mandatory sentences do not work and that our neighbours to the south are the perfect proof of that.

All I am asking, because I know this is not question period and it certainly is not an answer period either, is for some openness from the other side or the other sides that if there is empirical evidence that being tougher on the books on crime does not deter crime, and if there is an openness to suggest that there are other ways, such as, laudably, increasing the number of men and women on the street enforcing those laws, will there be an openness from the hon. member and from the other side to those aspects?

• (1700)

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's question is a very good one. Wrestling with crime and the results of crime has been very difficult for all Canadians. I will make one comment that an expert is someone with whom my friend seems to agree. However he does raise good questions. Surely all evidence on either side of an argument should be looked at by reasonable people when they reach a conclusion.

One of our concerns with the state of crime and punishment in Canada today is that we see example after example of criminals, young and old, who simply thumb their nose at the system because they are pretty certain they will not get caught and they know that even if they do get caught the justice system will just slap them on the wrist.

*The Address*

That, in our view, simply has to stop. There must be consequences to one's actions but right now there are very few consequences. If we perhaps spent some time delivering greater consequences for criminal acts, then perhaps after a little while these people would get the message and stop the criminal activity. It will not be easy and it will not be short term but we have to start now.

**Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, during the election campaign I had some opportunity to look at the Conservative Party's election platform. I was particularly interested in the section on access to information law reform because it was one of the most specific sections of the entire election platform. It not only said that the Conservative government will, at the earliest opportunity, implement all 88 provisions of Information Commissioner John Reid's recommended changes to access to information, it went on to list them.

Does my colleague have any knowledge, as this is a debate on the Speech from the Throne, as to why the newly elected federal government has pulled back from that very specific commitment? Does he agree with me that this is a reversal of a very specific promise made? Has there been any talk within his caucus as to why the Conservatives might have changed their mind about freedom of information in this country?

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** Mr. Speaker, the Conservative platform, and I read it and carried it with me for many, many days, did not list those 88 items.

I believe we have heard today that the federal accountability act will include provisions for access to information that are probably stricter than some of the items that were listed prior to the election. There is not a risk of going back on anything. In fact, we are moving ahead with the accountability act and with all the measures to access to information that will make government business much more accountable, much more open to public scrutiny and provide access to information guidelines that will be effective in holding accountability to the forefront.

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I must apologize to members present if I start coughing a little bit during my presentation. As some members know, I had a bit of a health problem last year. I suffered a heart attack. I am on some medication that gives me this dry cough throughout the day and throughout the evening. In my line of business, as everyone knows, it is not the easiest thing in the world to speak for 10 or 15 minutes constantly coughing. I apologize in advance if I bother any members here.

Before I begin, I must again congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, on your appointment. It is a great honour for one so young and I am sure, Mr. Speaker, that your mother must be extremely proud of you.

This is my first opportunity to stand before the 39th Parliament.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** Order, please. I thank the hon. parliamentary secretary for that. I can assure him that I will make an extra effort to notice him when he is getting up on questions and comments in the future.

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** I am sure you will, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for that.

This is my first opportunity to speak before the 39th Parliament. As many members before me have done, I would like to take a few moments before I get into the main body of my speech to thank a number of people.

First and foremost, I want to thank my family, particularly my wife who was extremely supportive not only in the election of 2006, but also in my first election in 2004. As you know, Mr. Speaker, since we have had a close friendship over the past number of years, it was a seat where I was not supposed to win for a number of reasons. My wife seemed to be the only one, besides myself, who had any confidence in my abilities to win that. That confidence was unwavering. I can assure all members that without the 110% support from one's wife and family, this is not a profession that one wants to get into. Once again, to my wife, Diane, I want to give her my thanks and my love for all her support.

I also want to say that friendship to me as well as family are the most important things in a person's life. There are two very special friends who have supported me all my career, Diane and Butch Lasek, and I thank them as well.

My colleague from Selkirk, who is sitting behind me, also deserves some mention for motivating me to be the best parliamentarian I can. It is kind of a perspective thing, I suppose.

Finally, I want to thank all the good people and the voters of Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre who sent me back to Parliament. I can assure all members that it is an honour and a privilege that I do not take lightly. There is not a Canadian who I know who would not feel the same sort of feeling I get when I stand in this chamber and address colleagues and Canadians. It is an honour not to be taken lightly. I am sure at one point in time every member here, when they started their political career, felt the same feelings that I have felt over my career. I want to assure the constituents of Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre that I will do my utmost to represent them and their views to the very best of my ability.

The reason we are here is to talk about the throne speech, of which I am extremely proud for a number of reasons, but primarily for this reason.

When I was first elected to Parliament in 2004, I ran on a campaign promising my constituents that if I were elected, I would do my utmost to clean up the waste and corruption in government. At that point in time, we were first starting to find out the sordid details of the sponsorship scandal. Most of my constituents, quite frankly, were sick and tired of what they felt were self-entitlement practices not just the federal Liberals, but of all governments across provincial jurisdictions. It crossed all party lines.

*The Address*

The message I heard back in 2004 was quite clear and strong. It was that I do what I could, if elected to Parliament, to clean up government, to make it more accountable, more transparent and more reflective of the desires and wishes of ordinary Canadians who wanted to see governments work on behalf of the voters. They felt that they were the masters of the political domain, not the politicians. I took that message very seriously. During the first 18 months, while in Ottawa, I did what I could, whether it be in committee or in this chamber, to bring those feelings from my constituents to the forefront and to do what I could to try to ensure that we had accountable and transparent government.

When we brought down the throne speech, in which the highlight in my opinion was the fact that we would bring in the accountability act, the strongest anti-corruption law ever seen in Canada, I felt that finally I had arrived. I felt that my constituents finally would be able to look at our party and government and say that we had done what we were asked to do, that we had taken some significant steps to ensure accountability of politicians and governments, that transparency was uppermost in the minds of the governing party of the day.

I am very proud that the Prime Minister and my party have introduced the federal accountability act to this place today. It will go a long way to restoring public confidence in all politicians.

● (1705)

I know from time to time, perhaps more often than not, opposition parties will criticize the government. They will criticize it on the basis of the throne speech being too flimsy and not having enough vision or being too shallow. That is just politics.

The Conservatives did the same thing when we were in opposition. It is the job and role of opposition parties to criticize the government and, hopefully, in addition to just criticizing, to bring forward plausible and intelligence solutions. I will absolutely guarantee that every member here feels the same way as I do. I do not believe there is a crook in this room. I do not believe there is a crooked politician in this room.

I believe every member in this place feels as I do. We want an accountable government to ensure our constituents are proud of us and proud of the work we do. We can absorb the criticism because that is part of the political game. However, I feel quite confident that all members in this assembly will do the best they can to ensure their motives and desires on behalf of their constituents are reflected in an honest and above board manner.

The problems we have seen in years past, which led to the sponsorship scandal as we know it now, were the fault of perhaps some Liberals, perhaps some individuals associated with the Liberal Party on the periphery and just maybe it was a little deeper than that. I absolutely believe that is behind us, and it should be behind us.

That is not to say, and I will give fair warning to the members opposite, that I will not bring that baggage out from time to time when I feel it is opportune to do so. I know the opposition is going to be critical of the Conservatives. That again is the political process in which we live. I honestly believe everyone in this assembly knows that we cannot afford to have any events like the sponsorship scandal to ever tarnish the names of politicians and parliamentarians again.

I want to assure all members of this assembly that, while I am proud of my party and the throne speech, I recognize that we will at times agree to disagree, but it will not diminish my respect for any member of this assembly. I can give this one assurance to you, Mr. Speaker, and to members on the government side and opposition side. I will continue to work on behalf of not only my constituents, but on behalf of every member of this assembly to regain the lustre that politicians once had. I believe this assembly needs it and members of this Parliament deserve it.

● (1710)

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the parliamentary secretary for the common sense approach that he took to issues of the past, and I congratulate him on that.

He is the member of Parliament for Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre, which is in southern Saskatchewan and has farming country in the area. This morning the Saskatchewan minister of agriculture was in town calling for an immediate cash infusion of \$575 million in emergency funding for producers to get their crops in the ground.

The member and the Prime Minister know that he took over a government with unprecedented surpluses, the best in the G-7. They know that money is available to deal with the farm crisis there. In fact, on March 31 last year the previous minister of finance, also from Regina, put in place \$1 billion to deal with the cash shortfall, and that was for the country. The best opportunity to acquire money for these kinds of needs is prior to March 31, and the government missed that opportunity.

We, as a party, are calling for an immediate cash infusion of more than \$1.6 billion. Could the member opposite give us some assurance that there will be immediate cash going out there to deal with the farm crunch? It is mentioned in the throne speech.

● (1715)

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** Mr. Speaker, first, we will certainly fulfill our commitments that were presented to the electorate during the last campaign, and that is to, at minimum, support the farmers with an initial minimum \$500 million in income support programs, which have to be changed.

He is quite right that Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre is a significant portion of rural Saskatchewan. I have many producers in my riding, as I am sure the hon. member does as do members who represent rural ridings across Canada. They are in dire straits. We have a financial crisis that is unprecedented.

*The Address*

Yes, income support is dominating the conversations that I have with producers, but I can assure the hon. member of one thing. Far more than those who are asking for quick cash are the cries for a government to finally to bring forward some long term vision for agriculture. Producers in my area did not see that from the previous Liberal government. They have not seen that long term vision or any kind of an option plan to deal with the vision. Producers need to know what plans the government has for them. They have to make business decisions based on the government's course of action. They have not seen any long term vision or long term planning from the previous Liberal government. More than anything else, more than income support, they are asking our government to provide that vision, and I can assure members that we will.

**Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I notice the throne speech states that the government would, “ensure that the Senate better reflects both the democratic values of Canadians”.

Does the hon. member opposite believe that the definition of “Senate democratic values and reforms” means naming a campaign co-chair bagman to the Senate?

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** Mr. Speaker, I find it quite ironic and amusing that this question would come from a Liberal. The Liberals have used the Senate as a landing pad for all the hacks and flaks political bagmen they have had over the years.

I admit that we have had some criticism from Canadians for the appointment of Mr. Fortier to the Senate. As the hon. member well knows, that this is not the typical Liberal Senate appointment. Come the next election, the senator from Montreal will be stepping down. It was done to get Mr. Fortier into cabinet to represent the city of Montreal.

Traditionally, I am sure the member knows this being a student of Parliament, the prime minister has within his purview the right to appoint anyone he or she wishes to his cabinet. Traditionally, if non-elected member is appointed, it is a member of the Senate. That is the process the Prime Minister took to ensure that the city of Montreal would be represented and will be represented well in Parliament.

**Mr. Paul Steckle (Huron—Bruce, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Ajax—Pickering.

I also want to extend to you my congratulations for your appointment to the chair. I look forward to working with you. I hope we can have conciliatory relationships over the next number of months and perhaps even years.

I would like to preface my comments tonight by congratulating the government on its first throne speech. It is hard to do that sometimes, but I am going to do it tonight. While it is never easy to draft such a document, I commend the government for its efforts.

With that aside, as I said last Thursday in the take note debate on agriculture, while I am now an opposition MP, I cannot accept that my job is simply to criticize government and its plans and priorities. Contrarily, I believe that in addition to putting forth an alternative position on certain issues, the role of an opposition MP is also to propose workable and constructive solutions to problems facing Canada.

I intend that statement to be my guiding principle with respect to how I conduct myself in the House. I will criticize when I feel it is warranted and I will congratulate when I feel it is deserved. In instances when I feel that the government is moving in a direction that is not in the best interest of the people of Huron—Bruce, I will attempt to suggest options to redirect.

We talk of the need for improved decorum in the House. This manifesto is my contribution to that effort.

With the above in mind, I would like to confine my comments tonight to the following key areas.

The first one is primary agriculture. My riding of Huron—Bruce is largely dependent on agriculture and that industry is in crisis. I intend to reiterate some of my comments of last Thursday. I believe they bear repeating as they were predominantly crafted as a result of consultation and input from farmers directly.

The second is rural infrastructure. Rural Canada represents only a small portion of the national population but is home to the vast majority of our geography. In short, due to the small tax base on which they draw, rural municipalities are struggling to maintain safe roads, sewers, and water delivery and purification systems while property taxes are higher and overall services are fewer and more scattered than would be available in large urban centres.

The third one is rural health care. With an aging population, this is perhaps one of the areas of greatest concern facing all rural Canadians. Our hospitals are suffering from a serious doctor shortage. That, coupled with an aging infrastructure, technological limitations and various demographic and geographic challenges, has placed an increasing strain on rural health care systems and providers.

The fourth area is economic development. If rural Canada is to survive, new and innovative industries must be fostered. In my opinion, certain national environmental demands can fit hand in glove with the unique attributes of rural Canada. Wind energy production, ethanol, biodiesel and carbon sinks all require substantial geography.

As already mentioned, rural Canada has considerable space that could be harnessed for these initiatives. In addition to sparking serious economic development in the region, these technologies would deliver high end job opportunities that would go a long way to encouraging young people to stay in rural Canada after completing their post-secondary education. This would in turn help to grow the economies of rural Canada, which would also assist with things like renewing infrastructure, recruiting new doctors and increasing the overall standard of living and household incomes of those who call rural Canada home.

I would like to elaborate on those issues, but before I do I will express my disappointment that the throne speech did not focus more attention on these matters. I believe that these four topics represent the spheres of most concern for those whom I represent. That is not to say that other matters are of little importance, but rather, I am suggesting that these are the most fundamental to the long term survival of rural Canada. I would strongly urge the government to give these priorities the attention they deserve.

*The Address*

At this time, I would again like to underscore the message I delivered last Thursday night in the take note debate on agriculture. Our farmers are facing their single greatest economic challenge in the past two decades. We are bleeding farmers at an astounding rate and that is adversely impacting on the whole of rural Canada. Hospitals, schools, churches, and small town main streets are all deteriorating as a result of the farm income crisis.

Last Thursday, most of the members agreed that the problems are grave. Furthermore, most agreed that immediate and decisive action is required if we have any hope of resolving the crisis in the short term and preventing further loss in the future. The problem is that most are unclear on what is needed to put the industry back on the rails. To that, I offer the following points.

• (1720)

First, I unreservedly support the risk management program that was designed and proposed by grains and oilseeds producer groups from Ontario. When challenged to provide an actual working policy item that would help their industry, these groups exceeded expectations.

This producer-designed program would go a long way toward initiating a safety net that would provide real assistance when farmers' backs are to the wall. My party has indicated our support for the proposal and I would urgently call upon the government and the other political parties in the House to affirm their support for the same.

A fully funded RMP is essential. The Province of Ontario is on the record as supporting the RMP. The federal Liberal Party is on the record as supporting the RMP. Farm groups are on the record as supporting the RMP. Numerous backbenchers from all political parties are on the record as supporting the RMP. Let us move forward with the implementation of a fully funded risk management program without delay.

Second, last November, the federal, provincial and territorial ministers of agriculture met with industry stakeholders in Regina. They struck an accord that proposed, among other measures, to establish a national agricultural policy that leads to growth in profitability, not just volume. According to the proposal, the solution should be enclosed in a Canadian farm bill. I would urge the minister to adopt such measures.

Let us equip our industry with tools that focus on building the industry long term. There will always be a place for ad hoc programing; however, if substantial and longer term programing is available, the need for ad hoc injections will be reduced.

As a continuation of my second point, we must move to immediately develop a long term national agricultural policy. We have never had a national direction for agriculture and our industry is suffering as a result. Ad hoc programing is cumbersome and has proven inadequate in overcoming many of the challenges facing our farmers. Farmers need support and investment that they can count on and plan for.

Fourth, Canada is a trading nation. With a small population and a resource based economy, Canada must trade with our neighbours in the international community. That said, when it comes to issues such as the WTO and NAFTA, Canada must work to protect our

agricultural sector. Marketing systems such as supply management are domestic structures that must be shielded from foreign attacks. The current system has consistently provided supply managed farmers with a fair return for a quality product. This must continue.

Next is the issue of food security. In my opinion, national sovereignty cannot be claimed without a safe and reliable food supply. If Canada cannot feed its population, then our national security is tenuous at best. Canada has never been hungry and, as a result, we have failed to grasp that food security is paramount. That must end if we are to ensure that Canada never goes hungry in the future.

If governments would adopt these measures, I truly believe that we would put in place a climate that would lend itself to fostering our agricultural industry. This would have spillover effects for the balance of rural Canada and, by extension, for Canada as a whole.

Next is the issue of rural infrastructure. Rural Canada faces serious challenges with respect to an aging infrastructure. With the loss of the railway comes an increased demand on our highways. Stress on the sewage and water treatment and management systems of our smaller communities has been intensified in the post-Walkerton climate.

These matters, when compounded with the deterioration of the physical structures required for the delivery of health care and education, pose perhaps the most serious threat ever faced by rural municipalities.

Governments have a tremendous role to play in rural infrastructure renewal. I would urge the government to continue with and to expand upon the infrastructure programing of the past administrations. All Canadians benefit from the spoils of rural Canada, and if we are to continue to enjoy that bounty, we must ensure that rural infrastructure is maintained and improved.

My next area of concern, which is rural health care, falls naturally from rural infrastructure and leads easily into economic development. In short, there is an interconnectivity of these matters that cannot and should not be ignored.

Rural health care needs are very different from those in urban Canada. The distance between residences and the hospital, fewer doctors, technological limitations, costs associated with transferring to larger centres for treatment, an aging population, and certain lifestyle choices all complicate the delivery of effective rural health care. We need to develop and implement policies that take these distinctive challenges into account.

Localized specialization, public education campaigns, increased incentives for new doctors and equipment updates all represent positive direction with respect to rural health care. I urge the government to consider such measures and I offer my assistance with any of the above.

*The Address*

Last, as I mentioned, if rural Canada is to survive and thrive, new and innovative industries must be created and fostered. In the age of green energy and Kyoto, I believe we can find a way to have the environment and the economy of rural Canada symbiotically win. Again, technology such as wind energy production requires large plots of land to build and sustain. Moreover, it requires a skilled workforce to maintain. Rural Canada has an abundance of both.

• (1725)

Effective integration of these environmental sciences into rural Canada will help to grow the local economies, which also would assist with the other areas I noted tonight.

Last week most members agreed that rural Canada is the foundation on which the rest of Canada is perched. A cracked foundation spells obvious trouble for the rest of the structure. As such, I would strongly urge the government to consider what I have said here this evening.

**Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I recognize that the hon. member has been a long-time member of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food. He served for a number of years as its Chair and has the passion for agriculture that is so desperately needed in this place, especially with the crisis we are facing today.

Would the hon. member care to comment on that great crisis we are facing today, in that the CAIS program designed by the former government has not met the needs and expectations of farmers across this country from one end to the other? There are very few commodities for which this program has worked to their benefit.

Would the hon. member comment on the CAIS program? What adaptations do we have to make to that program in the interim? Would the member also look at the long term vision as to what we need to do in the industry to meet the needs of this crisis and set our farmers on a solid footing in the hopefully not too distant future?

• (1730)

**Mr. Paul Steckle:** Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague has been a member of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food for the last year or so, and in fact maybe for a couple of years, and I thank him for his efforts and his work on behalf of Canadian farmers.

I must point out at the outset that this issue of addressing agriculture is something that is long overdue. We have done it ad hoc for many years because in past recent history we have not had consistently bad years four or five years in a row, but we now are in an unparalleled time in history in terms of disaster.

Therefore, when the CAIS program was initially designed, it was to take over from the NISA program, of course, as all members know. The NISA program was designed for a certain time and it supported certain elements of the agriculture sector, but it did not do a full job. What was wanted was a program that basically looked after all aspects of agriculture, all facets of the industry, and it was to be a one size fits all program. It did not.

As we now understand, given that we have had three or four years of difficulty in the farming sector, we cannot sustain three or four years in a row when a program pays only 70% of the losses. We need to reinstate the third leg of the stool. Of course, Saskatchewan,

Manitoba and Ontario at one time had the market revenue program, or GRIP, which did exactly that.

We need to return to a program similar to that, perhaps similar to what they have in Quebec in the ASRA program. We believe in the risk management program proposed by the industry here in Ontario and somewhat endorsed by Manitoba farmers. Just today I was given the assurance from Saskatchewan farmers that they felt it was a viable program. I would encourage the government to look at that program because it is one that can be implemented reasonably and—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** I apologize to the hon. member, but I wanted to get in another couple of questions. I thought the member for Western Arctic had a question. I am sorry.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Ajax—Pickering.

**Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise in this chamber again, now back for the second term. While it is not my first time to rise and speak in this session, now that I have the opportunity, I do want to thank the electors of the riding of Ajax—Pickering for the tremendous privilege of being in this House and getting the opportunity to represent them in this different capacity as an opposition member.

Certainly, I share some of the sentiments I heard from hon. members around the need to work collaboratively, to discuss issues, to hopefully find consensus, and to the best of our ability make this minority government work.

However, with regret, there are some issues that do need to be raised as a number of issues were simply missed in the throne speech. I hope that the fact they were missed does not mean that they are going to be ignored because they are extremely important issues.

I would start with early childhood development but more broadly on the issue of education. Fundamentally, what the throne speech misses, what the Conservatives as a party miss, is the fact that early childhood development is not about day care. It is not about simply taking care of children. It is about creating a continuum for learning that starts from the youngest age, goes into post-secondary, and then into lifelong learning.

It is about the fact that when children are in those most formative years, they need nurturing and caring environments. Whether those environments are provided at home or in an early childhood learning environment, the fact is parents need real choice.

Simply providing something in the neighbourhood of \$3 a day is not going to achieve that. If we were to say to parents, “Instead of providing public school, we are going to give you \$3 or \$4 a day and good luck to you”, would Canadians think that was appropriate? Absolutely not.

In the same way, it is totally inappropriate to treat early childhood development in that way. It is a lazy policy. Instead of trying to deal with creating spaces, creating nurturing environments, and creating real choice for Canadian parents, the government is going to send them a cheque in the mail and say good luck. That is not good enough and we need to do a lot more.

*The Address*

In my constituency we have a huge preponderance of families. The vast majority, where both parents are working, require high quality child care facilities, and this is an issue that must be redressed. It is simply not acceptable to scrap the agreements that we entered into as a government in the previous session, toss them out the window, and say, "Here are a couple of bucks. I hope things work out for you".

On the issue of post-secondary education, I was extremely disappointed in the document. We recognize that our competitiveness and our strength as a nation is dependent upon the type of education that we are able to receive and upon the quality of that education. We have been making great advancements, not only on the education side but also in research and development with the partnerships we have been working on with post-secondary institutions. This document ignored that. It simply said it is not one of the priorities and that is not acceptable.

Our future and our strength as a nation are very much dependent upon our ability to invest in the education of young people, in post-secondary education and in those facilities, whether it is our fifty-fifty plan or, more importantly to me, the idea that we make post-secondary education accessible for all. That is not just about tuition. That is about saying that regardless of their background, they have the opportunity to go. If they are coming from extremely wealthy families, reduced tuition may not be the smartest thing to do. Maybe what we need to be doing is focusing on those individuals who come from less fortunate circumstances who need the assistance to get the education they need to thrive, have a successful and happy future, and contribute to our economy.

Perhaps the most tragic oversight in this document though, the one that perplexes me to the greatest extent, is the environment. The reality is that our environment is in mortal peril. If we were to go to our Arctic, we would see the dramatic changes that are occurring. We would see what is happening to our climate when the ice continually recedes and turns into water which then absorbs more energy and fuels that process even more. We would see permafrost give way and the carbon then be released. We would see the fact that our planet simply cannot sustain the carbon that we are putting into the atmosphere. It is reaching a point of saturation and there is a recognition that we as a globe have a crisis that we must face.

• (1735)

What do the Conservatives do in the wake of this crisis, at this time of great need and leadership? They say they are going to abandon Kyoto. They are going to slash funding to environmental projects. They are going to ignore it as an issue and not reference it as something that we need to put front and centre.

The environment deserves to be put front and centre. It is an area that we have taken leadership on and we need to continue to do that. We need to go back to our Kyoto commitments. We cannot say we will not bother because it is difficult. Instead, we have to find out how to get there, how we can be leaders in this area. We need to find out how we can get to the point where we can lead the world in terms of what we are doing with respect to the environment.

We as parliamentarians must be the voices for those who do not have a voice, whether it is a child in the back of a classroom who has been forgotten and needs additional help, whether it is a person who

has been forgotten on the street who no longer has any hope, whether it is somebody in a neighbourhood where they do not feel they have a future, or whether it is young people who say to themselves that this society does not have a place for them.

Beyond just speaking for our constituents, it is our role as parliamentarians to also speak for people who do not show up, whose problems have major implications for this nation but who do not have the ability to articulate for themselves.

Citizenship to me in Canada must mean hope and opportunity. It must mean hope and opportunity for all of our citizens, whether they are an aboriginal on a reserve, whether they are a young person in a difficult urban environment, whether it is someone who is homeless, or whether it is somebody with a learning disability. Every level of government has a responsibility to ensure that we do not leave Canadians behind. We really must do more to improve on this.

Another oversight is cities and communities. I am deeply proud of what we were able to do in the last session of Parliament. We were finally able to recognize that municipalities deserve a seat at the national table. They deserve to have their issues taken seriously. They deserve to be recognized as the engines of growth in our economy. Municipalities have been under-resourced, ignored, and dumped on, and for the first time they were taken seriously, given resources, listened to and brought to the table.

How disappointing for those municipalities to look through the Speech from the Throne, that flimsy document, and see virtually no reference to the cities and communities agenda. After all of that progress, the government is going to let it slip away because it is not a big enough priority. I submit it is a priority and it should be put front and centre.

Some of the issues that the Conservatives have chosen to deal with are half measures and I will take accountability as one example as we dealt with it today. The truth is it is selective accountability. The Conservatives talk about restrictions on lobbyists, but they have a lobbyist on the front bench as the defence minister.

In my opinion, if the government is going to deal with the issue of lobbyists and say that once someone leaves government they cannot become one, it should also deal with the other side. If a lobbyist has been lobbying for a certain company and then gets elected as a parliamentarian, the notion that they would sit as a cabinet member is ridiculous. This is a clear example of selective accountability.

With respect to tax cuts, the Conservatives have said on the one hand that they are going to give Canadians some money back. That is great. Canadians are going to get 1% back on the GST. On the other hand, the government is going to take away the tax cuts that would actually give more to low and middle income families. If someone is looking to buy a jet this is great news, but it is not great news if someone is going to buy groceries.

*The Address*

We need to take a look at this document and ask two questions. How do we really make a difference in the lives of Canadians? What are the real priorities of Canadians? I can tell the House that this document did not speak to the priorities of the constituents of my riding. I will fight with all my effort to ensure that what we work on in this session of Parliament is a reflection of the true needs and priorities of Canadians.

• (1740)

**Mr. Patrick Brown (Barrie, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my question for the member for Ajax—Pickering has to do with all this talk about supporting municipalities. When the last government was in power, I served as a city councillor and was astonished by the press conferences and rhetoric around supporting municipalities, and that money did not arrive for the municipalities. Where was it? That was the biggest problem with the past government. It was more about making speeches than presenting ideas and public policy that could be implemented.

In the municipality that I come from, Barrie has a budget that ranges over \$200 million. This brand new deal for municipalities amounted to less than \$1 million. The promises that were made were forecasted five years down the road. Talk about leadership for today not leadership five years down the road. It was a government that did not actually get tangible results in the last Parliament. The Liberal government had 13 years to deliver. How come there were no results?

**Mr. Mark Holland:** Mr. Speaker, I can tell the House about the experience of the municipalities in my riding. The fact of the matter is that the city of Pickering, over the next five years under the plan that was signed, will be getting \$7.9 million, the town of Ajax over \$6 million, and the region of Durham \$41 million.

By the way, once the agreements were signed with AMO, the first year's funding flowed directly to those municipalities. For the first time, not only were they receiving money but they had a predictable source of new revenue that they could work with. What an accomplishment. It was not just a one time cheque or a one time action or announcement but ongoing, sustainable five year funding that they could look at and base their projections upon. That is a real accomplishment.

I was also a councillor with the city of Pickering and the region of Durham for a period of seven years. For the longest time I watched at the provincial level as we got dumped on and ignored. One of the reasons I was so excited to run as a member of Parliament was because we finally had a leader who took up the cause of municipalities, who recognized that they deserved a place at the national table, and finally, in a real and tangible way, delivered.

• (1745)

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I do not mind the member for Ajax—Pickering pointing out that there are some serious gaps in the present government's Speech from the Throne and raising for all Canadians the fact that there is little in the Speech from the Throne about education, agriculture or cities.

I would accept that but for the fact that I cannot help but hear the words of the Liberals ringing in my ears when we raised exactly the same point with them when they presented their last federal budget. We told the Liberals there was nothing in the budget speech about

education, agriculture or cities. What did we get back? We got nothing but disdain and disparagement from the Liberals, who treated us with ridicule and scorn for daring to raise those important issues.

If it were not for such a double message that we are getting from the Liberals, I could accept it, but it is very hard in the debate concerning the Speech from the Throne to accept this from Liberals. They are asking day to day why we keep beating up on the Liberals instead of the government. That is why, because we could not get through to them on these important issues.

They have created a situation where in fact Canadians are left scrambling with some very difficult situations because in fact the government cut transfers to education and did not put the money back. When they tried to redress the issue with health care, they took the money from education and the social transfer to boost money for health care. We now have \$3 billion less in transfers for education today than we had before that episode under the Liberal government.

**Mr. Mark Holland:** Mr. Speaker, I am extremely proud of the record without going over all the details of it, but that is not the point today. The point today is that we have a new government and we need to hold that government to account to ensure the programs and services that we care about, and the priorities of Canadians that we represent get articulated and taken care of.

Fundamentally, my focus, sitting here as a representative, is not to be a historian, but instead to focus on the new government and to ask how it is going to answer the priorities that need to be redressed for Canadians.

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions and I think you would find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practices of the House, on Monday, April 24, at the conclusion of the debate on the address in reply to the Speech from the Throne, the question be deemed put and the motion be deemed adopted.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** Does the hon. parliamentary secretary have the unanimous consent to move the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

**Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, before I begin my speech, I will be splitting my time with my hon. colleague from Trinity—Spadina.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the people of the Western Arctic who provided me with the honour and privilege of representing them in the House.

*The Address*

My riding, unlike most, represents a complete Canadian jurisdiction, the Northwest Territories. With an area of over 1.3 million square kilometres, the riding is the second largest in the country. It is home to Canada's pristine river, the Mackenzie River or, as the Dene say, the Deh Cho. The Mackenzie drains much of western Canada into the Arctic Ocean and is the key geographic feature of this vast land.

The people of the Northwest Territories are as varied as the great land they live in. The over 40,000 people who call the Northwest Territories their home include Chipewyan, Cree, Tlicho, Slavey, Gwich'in, Inuvialuit and Métis, as well as Canadians from all parts of the country and newcomers from all parts of the globe.

These people live side by side, working and playing together to build homes for themselves and their children. It is the diversity of culture that is one of the strengths of the Northwest Territories. We are small in number but strong in heart and we truly represent Canada.

The human history of the Northwest Territories stretches back thousands of years, starting with the Dene who lived in harmony with the land for generations before the first non-aboriginal people arrived.

The Northwest Territories became part of Canada in 1870. It took on its present shape in 1999 following the creation of Nunavut.

The future for the Northwest Territories has the potential for greatness. It is blessed with an abundance of natural resources which, if developed in an environmentally responsible and sustainable manner, will add much to Canada's economy.

During the election campaign, the Prime Minister made many references to the importance of the north to Canada and yet I was surprised and disappointed that there was not one mention of Canada's north in the opening address. It seems that once again we have a government that is all talk and no action. The people of the north have already suffered from 12 years of that style of government under the Liberals. Are they to continue suffering?

The people of my riding have a long list of issues that for too long have either been ignored by the federal government or, when it has addressed these issues, the government takes care of its own interests first rather than those of northerners.

Many members of the House may not be aware that the powers of the three territories are delegated from Ottawa rather than entrenched in the Constitution. It is this Parliament that determines what northerners may have control over. Because of this, Parliament has a fiduciary responsibility to the people of the Northwest Territories as well as to those who live in the Yukon and Nunavut. Northerners are tired of living under a colonial regime that, like all colonial regimes, robs the colony and serves its own interests.

The people of the Northwest Territories need action from the government on their political development. As I mentioned, the law outlining the authorities of the Government of the Northwest Territories is outdated but this is just the tip of the iceberg. For too many years the federal government has dragged its heels in the negotiation of self-government and land claims. Further, for those

claims that have been settled, Ottawa has failed to properly implement them.

Until Ottawa settles all outstanding claims, truly recognizes the inherent right to aboriginal self-government and the charter right of public government, the political development of the Northwest Territories will remain stagnant.

After the lack of strategic direction provided by the federal government in the development of our diamonds, northerners are concerned about how future resource development will be handled by the federal government. We are all aware of the ongoing hearings into the Mackenzie Valley natural gas pipeline. The process is taking too narrow a focus on the scope and impact of the development. What is needed here is a strategic environmental assessment of all the development that will flow from a major gas industry in the Mackenzie Valley.

One of the key pieces of legislation here is the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act. This federal legislation places almost all of the control of the Northwest Territories' vast natural resources in the hands of the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development with only non-binding advice from appointed representatives of aboriginal claims groups and common citizens of the Northwest Territories. This process under the Liberals has meant that the resource management decisions have been made with the interests of Ottawa put ahead of those of the Northwest Territories.

● (1750)

The result has been that the vast resources of the north, be they mineral, oil and gas, have been given away to multinational corporations by the federal government, by anybody's standards, at fire sale prices. To add insult to injury, even at these cut rate royalties the government, according to the public accounts, earned over \$270 million in the 2004-05 fiscal year from the NWT's resources while the people of the Northwest Territories only earned \$3.5 million. I dare any member of the House, especially those from Alberta, to call this fair.

The Northwest Territories needs a fair financing agreement with Canada. Right now the federal government claws back nearly every cent that the Northwest Territories raises. This means that the economic development of the Northwest Territories benefits my constituency very little. There are increased costs due to economic development but without the benefit of increased revenue from this development the reality is increasing funding shortfalls for essential programs such as education, health care, municipal infrastructure and social housing.

I also call on the Minister of Finance to fund the north based upon the real cost of programs and service delivery. Due to the north's small population and vast distances between communities, per capita funding comes nowhere near meeting those real costs.

*The Address*

The Prime Minister talks about the fiscal imbalance. A per capita approach to funding for the north will not solve our fiscal imbalance. For years the Northwest Territories has been calling on Ottawa to lift the arbitrary borrowing limit of \$300 million placed on the Government of the Northwest Territories. To quote our finance minister during this year's budget speech, "reflects an outdated and unreasonable view that we cannot make sound financial decisions on our own".

The Northwest Territories wants nothing more than a fair shake when it comes to financing from Ottawa. There should be one objective when discussing financing with the Northwest Territories and that is to ensure that the people of the north receive the same level of government service programs that other Canadians receive.

Another issue that my constituents would like to see some action on by the federal government is helping them deal with the high cost of living in the north. In the late 1980s the last Conservative government brought in the northern residents tax deduction to help northerners offset the high cost of essentials such as food, housing, fuel and transportation. Set at a maximum of \$15 per day, this deduction has not changed in 18 years.

I call upon the Conservative finance minister to do what his Liberal predecessor would not: increase the residency portion of the northern residents tax deduction by 50% and to index the deduction to the consumer price index for the north.

Another issue that the people of the north want addressed by Ottawa is climate change. While the government says that we need to rework our commitment to climate change, the people of the north will suffer. The effects of our warming planet are already being felt in the north. Many experts believe the decline of the caribou numbers, as well as other animals such as polar bears, are directly related to climate change. In addition, record high temperatures endanger the boreal forest as well as communities along the Beaufort Sea where rising sea levels and increased storms are devastating the coastline.

The people of the north cannot wait while the environment minister reworks Canada's commitment to greenhouse gas reductions in order to suit the needs of large corporations. Action is needed now.

Canada's north is an integral part of this nation's cultural identity. In the coming years it will become vital to this nation's economy through the supply of natural resources. As the Prime Minister noted so many times during the election campaign, the north is an important part of Canada's sovereignty.

However it is time the federal government realizes that northerners are Canadians with interests that must be respected. The north is not Canada's colony and it is time the federal government stopped acting as if it were. It is time the federal government realized that Canadians' love of our land, our status as equals and our concerns for the future of our children and grandchildren stretch from sea to sea to sea.

• (1755)

**Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would at the outset congratulate the

hon. member for what I understand is his first full speech in the House of Commons. I look forward to working with the hon. member. We have philosophical differences and we do not agree on some things but he did strike some common themes in some of his comments.

My question for the hon. member is in relation to the Mackenzie Valley pipeline. He touched on the pipeline and I sensed in his comments that he was not particularly supportive of that project. I would be curious to hear if he might describe to the House what his position is with respect to the Mackenzie Valley pipeline, whether his party is supportive of that project, what his thoughts are, for example, on the socio-economic fund that has been discussed and what thoughts he has on the aboriginal pipeline group and its involvement in the project.

If I might, I would ask the hon. member to address those points.

• (1800)

**Mr. Dennis Bevington:** Mr. Speaker, yes, the Mackenzie Valley gas pipeline is an important issue and, as I mentioned in my speech, we need to address it as a gas industry.

The problem we have with many of the environmental processes and assessments that have gone on in the past is that governments have tended to take projects in isolation from the likely results of their future development.

When we look at a project like that, we need to look at it in the context of what it will create for us in the Mackenzie Valley and how we can best judge the impacts of the full project and the full development of this rather larger gas industry with estimates about a third of the total reserve that Alberta had when it started out?

I fought three elections saying that the concept of developing northern gas for Canadians is a good idea but of course we need to have projects that work for ourselves. The purpose of my speech today was to point out the necessity for northerners to be listened to on projects such as the Mackenzie Valley project.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Malo (Verchères—Les Patriotes, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I understand that the citizens and residents of the Northwest Territories must live with and adapt to climate change. However, there are also a number of other Canadians, including Quebeckers, who must also do so.

Last spring, I had the privilege of travelling the St. Lawrence coast together with some of my Bloc Québécois colleagues. Shoreline erosion is a phenomenon that affects a good number of people living along the St. Lawrence. In the gulf and estuary, shoreline erosion has increased because of climate change.

I urge the government to re-establish the shoreline protection program, eliminated by the previous government. In this way, we may counter climate change and protect the shorelines. This program could also protect people who live along the river section of the St. Lawrence.

*The Address*

With regard to environmental protection and climate change caused by greenhouse gases, on February 6 the Saint-Denis-sur-Richelieu municipal council unanimously adopted a motion in support of the Kyoto protocol. I would like to obtain the unanimous consent of this House to table this motion.

[*English*]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** The hon. member has requested unanimous consent to table a document. Does the member have unanimous consent to table the document?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**Mr. Dennis Bevington:** Mr. Speaker, climate change is an issue that will come on like a gangbuster in the next while. We cannot stop the forces of nature with bricks and mortar. On the Arctic coast, people in the community of Tuktoyaktuk have for years been putting in brick rip-rap to prevent the erosion of their community but that is not working because the forces of nature are stronger.

When we see the rising of the sea and the increased storms that occur at times of the year, these are things that drive a change in climate. The effect on the animals, the birds and the feeding grounds in the Arctic as well from these rising sea levels and from these increased storms is very significant.

There is much scientific work going on right now to determine the true impact on our migratory bird populations.

● (1805)

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, as a new Canadian, an immigrant like so many people in my riding of Trinity—Spadina, I am proud to stand in this chamber where so many great Canadians have served.

I was inspired by this House back in 1989 when every member of every party rose to support a motion by Ed Broadbent of the NDP. That motion was a pledge by Parliament to make child poverty history. Seventeen years after that promise, I stand here on behalf of all the children and youth who live in poverty today in Trinity—Spadina. I am here because since 1989, one Conservative government and four Liberal governments have failed to act on child poverty and have failed to act on a whole host of issues so important to our future generations.

People in my riding of Trinity—Spadina are very engaged in the political process and have high expectations. They voted on January 23 with hope that we would all act together here to get results. They are listening closely. They want this Parliament to work and the government to act.

People in Chinatown in my riding have been listening to the Prime Minister's promise of an apology and redress for the Chinese head tax and exclusion act. They are listening now for news of swift action for the now very elderly head tax payers. We are listening for this news before another Canada Day has passed, because July 1, 1923 was when the Chinese exclusion act became a law, a dark day for Canada. Let us now right this historic wrong. In Canada, Chinese Canadians deserve no less.

Swift action should be a signal of hope for many other immigrants and ethnic communities in my riding, Portuguese, Italians, eastern

Europeans, Koreans, Vietnamese, South Asians and people from the Caribbean. For years we have expressed concerns about the immigration and refugee system which was neglected by four different Liberal immigration ministers and is deeply flawed. We see families struggling to be reunited and families with undocumented workers being ripped apart, workers who are badly needed in our riding and our city.

The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration has been listening respectfully to these concerns, but we need to see action. We need an overhaul of the immigration system. We need a plan for regularization of undocumented workers. The people of Trinity—Spadina deserve no less.

People who live and work on our waterfront have been listening very closely for a clear commitment to close down the rogue federal port authority, freeze the expansion of the Toronto Island airport and proceed with revitalization of a vibrant waterfront. We have heard some words of encouragement from the Minister of Transport and now from the President of the Treasury Board. We are listening for a specific commitment and a plan. The people of our riding and of our city deserve no less.

With the University of Toronto, the Ontario College of Art and Design, George Brown College, and Ryerson business faculty all in my riding, thousands of students are listening very closely to hear real commitment to post-secondary education, a real commitment to students and to the future. They deserve no less.

People across our riding from the most affluent to the poorest neighbourhoods are listening to the wheezing and coughing of our children and our elderly parents on smog days in downtown Toronto. Last year there were 62 smog days. We listened to the throne speech which pledged a reduction in pollution and greenhouse gases. We heard the Minister of the Environment affirm this promise. Now we are listening for word of effective action. The people deserve no less.

Working families across Trinity—Spadina are listening with growing concerns for some hope on child care. They have been waiting for a long time for some signs that the federal government actually understands the need for child care spaces and quality programs, not slogans about choice where no choice is offered. This is a great concern in my riding where three out of four mothers are in the workforce, where child care centres have long, long waiting lists, where too few children have access to affordable, high quality, non-profit child care.

*The Address*

•(1810)

The people in my riding are listening. Mr. Speaker, while you can allow ministers and members to speak, you cannot instruct the government to listen. If you could, Mr. Speaker, I would ask you to instruct the government to listen to the community leaders and the mayors of Canada's municipalities who are trying to proceed with a child care program in the face of budget cuts. They should listen to the first nations, the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, because they understand the impact of child care on breaking the cycle of poverty. They are crying out for child care spaces as 40% of aboriginal children live in poverty in this country.

The government should also listen to the provinces. Recently Nova Scotia's new Conservative Premier Rodney MacDonald added his voice to those of the premiers from Ontario, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Quebec. They are all calling on the Prime Minister to deliver on child care spaces and funding for child care programs.

The government should listen to the economists, the human resource professionals and corporate leaders who can point to the economic advantages of publicly funded child care. There are examples such as Norway which show that there is a clear link between public child care and high productivity in the workforce. Public child care reaps economic rewards and creates new taxpayers.

Finally, the government should listen to the children. Think of the responsibility of every government to all its citizens, including the most vulnerable, including those who have no vote and no choice.

Parents struggling to make ends meet have heard the pledge of \$1,200 per child under six and that has raised some hope, but they are listening for the catch 22. As it stands, the \$1,200 allowance would be subject to taxes and benefit clawbacks, to the point that a working couple earning \$30,000 a year in Ontario would see only \$199 of that \$1,200, according to the Caledon Institute. They would lose the balance of it to taxes, benefits and credit reductions.

The choice in child care allowance would therefore amount to only 55¢ a day for that working couple. Fifty-five cents is not even enough to buy one diaper, let alone provide child care. Even worse, some families living in poverty, the poorest families who are on social assistance, may not get a penny of this because there is no guarantee that the provincial government would not claw back every penny of this \$1,200 family allowance.

We can do better. We must do better. The children of Canada deserve no less. The children of this country deserve so much more.

[*Translation*]

We can and we must do better. The children of Canada deserve so much more.

[*English*]

Our party will work with others in this Parliament to achieve multi-year funding to ensure that publicly operated child care programs are sustainable for the long term. Our party will work with others in this Parliament to protect child care by enshrining it in legislation with a national child care act to be a cornerstone of Canada like the Canada Health Act. Our party will work with others in this Parliament to help end child poverty through ensuring families receive every penny of that \$1,200 family allowance

without taxes or clawbacks. That would be achieved by delivering the \$1,200 through the child tax benefit.

We have an extraordinary opportunity to make this minority Parliament work. Let us start by reaching across the aisle and across party lines to make choice in child care more than a slogan, but a reality for today's children and for future generations.

•(1815)

**Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the new member for Trinity—Spadina on her wonderful presentation today. It is wonderful to have her here in the House. We know that she has a very strong reputation and record for her work as the children's and youth advocate for the city of Toronto and her strong representation for social justice, not just in Toronto but across the country. Her remarks today hit very hard in terms of what the real priorities are not only for her constituents, but indeed for millions of people right across the country.

I would like the hon. member to comment on the diversity in this place. She will know that on Monday, the NDP women's caucus held a press conference. We talked about under-representation in this House, particularly for women, and how important it is to seek electoral reform, for example, on proportional representation. That is something that is very dear to the NDP.

I would like to ask the hon. member if she would comment on the importance of that matter and what it means for women to be in this House and to ensure that we achieve representation and gender parity, which is what the NDP is calling for.

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** Mr. Speaker, the first thing I noticed when I walked in here was that there were very few women and visible minorities. This House is supposed to represent all of Canada, but that certainly is not the case. That was immediately apparent.

I am glad to be in a party where 41.4% of our caucus are women. That is something that is worthy of celebration, but it did not just come by chance. It took work. It took commitment. It has been a priority of the NDP for a long time. Members will notice that the percentage has gone up every time.

I cannot say that of my colleagues in another party where only 11% of the party's caucus are women. Perhaps there is a steeper learning curve to understand what working families really need in terms of taking care of their children. One of the things we notice in different parts of the world is that in countries where there is proportional representation, there is a good percentage of women. That is what we need to work toward, proportional representation and electoral reform.

**Mr. Patrick Brown (Barrie, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Trinity—Spadina mentioned all the politicians that she references. I would suggest that instead of consulting politicians, she should consult parents. That is what this government is doing. We are consulting parents on child care.

*The Address*

One stat that I find very intriguing is the amount of money that is going to go to Ontario: \$963 million. I would be very surprised if the member for Trinity—Spadina would want to say no to \$963 million for Ontario children. Those children deserve better. Certainly this plan provides a lot more than the \$448 million that would have been devised under the Liberal plan.

It is about time that we had a government that stood up for young children. That is what this Prime Minister is doing.

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** Mr. Speaker, it would be interesting if the parents actually got that money. It is quite easy to make a promise of \$1,200, that it is going to be universal for every kid six and under. That is an easy promise to make, but since the government introduced an accountability act today, I want the members to actually do some accounting to parents in Ontario.

For parents who have an income between \$20,000 and \$40,000, most of the \$1,200 will disappear. It will go into one hand and disappear from the other through income tax. Whether it is provincial income tax, federal income tax, the child tax benefit, it does not matter. It is going to disappear.

The other thing is that Ontario stands to gain 448—

• (1820)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** I apologize, but we have one more speaker left before 6:30. The hon. member for Northumberland—Quinte West.

**Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on my first occasion to speak in this place, let me congratulate you on your appointment. I will be sharing my time this evening with my hon. colleague from Langley.

I would like to thank once again the great citizens of Northumberland—Quinte West for placing their trust and faith in me in order to act in their best interests and that of their families. That I take as a sacred trust and shall, therefore, be ever mindful of the great responsibility, the honour and the privilege to represent them in this most august place.

Further, I want to thank my life partner, my wife of 33 years, for all her support and love. Judy and my sons James and Matthew keep this member grounded with their love.

It is in this vein that I wish to speak to the House on the Speech from the Throne and especially those particulars surrounding health care.

I live in the village of Warkworth. Many of my neighbours must from time to time travel for medical interventions and treatment. In recent years I have become dismayed and distressed with the increase in wait times. Sadly, over the last 10 years, they have doubled. However, there is light at the end of the wait times tunnel. Our government has made a commitment to reduce wait times and will guarantee reasonable wait times. This is a priority.

Last Friday, when I went home to the riding, my first stop was at the funeral of a well known and dearly loved constituent. Our friend and neighbour died of that dastardly disease that is no stranger to many of our friends and family, and that is cancer. As unfortunate as this story is, I know that even in his worst moments, he received the best care from people he loved. Our government has made a

statement on wait times guarantee and I want to be sure that Canadians receive the health care they have paid for with their hard earned tax dollars.

As I mentioned, I am not new to the evils of cancer, nor are my colleagues, many of whom are in the House here now. My mother, brother and sister have been affected by this disease. Fortunately, they received the care they needed. However, far too often Canadians find themselves on waiting lists that are far too long, forcing them to wait, sometimes in pain, discomfort and fear, and some at risk to their lives.

I want to ensure that no Canadian has to wait too long for treatment. I know that this government to which I belong will ensure that no Canadian is left out in the cold and that we will work together with our provincial partners in order to meet the wait times guarantee.

I know the Minister of Health and his team are working very hard and are responsible for a budget of \$41 billion over 10 years in health care and will be contributing to the health care envelope. I am happy to report that \$5.5 billion of that has been earmarked specifically to reduce wait times. That is no small amount.

Further, the guarantee will ensure that if people cannot get the medical care they need where they live, in the public system and within an established benchmark, they will be able to get that care either outside their community or their province, with the cost being covered by the public insurance system. No one can argue that this is significant progress.

Thinking outside the box, commonly referred to as innovation, will be critical to ensure that health care remains timely and sustainable. It should be noted by all in the House, indeed this country, that Alberta has recently reduced wait times from 47.7 weeks to 4.7 weeks for hip and knee replacements. This clearly demonstrates that dramatic, patient-centre innovation is achievable within our current public health care system. We must be mindful that these approaches must be consistent with the principles of a universally accessible and equitable public health care system.

• (1825)

We in Cobourg are most fortunate to have a state of the art new hospital due in part to the current minister, when he acted in his provincial capacity, and most commendably due to the generosity of the people of west Northumberland. In Quinte West there is an expanded hospital at the Trenton Memorial Hospital, part of the Quinte health care system. The hospital my family and I use is in Campbellford. The Campbellford Memorial Hospital is a most caring, loving and competent place with which to receive health care. Some of the best hospitals are in my riding and the health care workers, men and women, who operate them are second to none.

*The Address*

In addition to health care, I want to remind Canadians why they voted for this new government. It is because we promised to deliver five key priorities: cutting the GST from 7% to 6% and then to 5%; ensuring our communities are safe by cracking down on gun, gang and drug crime; giving parents choice in child care with a \$1,200 annual payment for each child under the age of six; creating 125,000 more child care spaces; and working with the provinces and territories to establish to a health care patient wait times guarantee.

I look forward to the things that are to come under the direction of the new Prime Minister, including today's announcement of the federal accountability act. This is just another way we are sticking to our election platform commitments. That is why I am so pleased to see the Speech from the Throne set an agenda and stick to it, which is a welcome change to what we have seen in governments past.

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we talk about child care and the \$1,200 to be given to families to help them. I looked at the throne speech and there was nothing in it about working families and employment insurance. Because of the cuts that the Liberals made to EI 1996, only 38% of men qualify for EI and only 33% of women qualify. This means that 800,000 people in our country do not qualify for employment insurance, and 1.4 million children are going hungry. The throne speech did not talk at all about that.

It is nice to give money, which the province will probably take away from people who are on welfare, for example, or through taxation. People are hurting due to the changes made by the Liberal government in 1996. What are the views of the member on my comments, which are facts?

**Mr. Rick Norlock:** Mr. Speaker, I come from a working class family. I am the eldest of six children. I can recall wearing hand-me-downs, et cetera. I can say that the \$1,200 for every child under six, which the government proposes, will indeed affect mostly Canadians of lesser means.

In addition, I have heard talk in the House of how supposedly little the 1% reduction in the GST will mean to people as a whole. In particular, I have seen many statistics where it is actually the poorest people who will save the most. Under the former Liberal government's reduction plan, 32% of Canadians would pay no tax and would receive nothing from their tax reduction. Every Canadian

will receive a benefit from the 1% reduction in the GST. That will go a long way to helping people manage their budgets.

• (1830)

**Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member opposite on what appeared to be his maiden speech, if I heard him correctly. I listened with great interest to his remarks. I do have a question, however, and it goes to the issue of child care.

I am a mother. I have actually had the experience of using all of the so-called choices that exist: a family member taking care of my child; my child being taken care of by a caregiver in the caregiver's home; a licensed caregiver; my child in non-subsidized day care; and then my child in subsidized day care. I can tell the member opposite that as a parent in 1993 it was costing me \$25 a day in unsubsidized day care and with the child caregiver in the licensed home. Today, I am told by those groups and parents and private day care centres that are not subsidized, it costs anywhere between \$75 and \$90 a day.

So while I applaud the \$1,200 taxable per child under six years old, my experience is that it will not help those parents who have to put their children—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** The hon. member for Northumberland—Quinte West, with a very brief reply if possible.

**Mr. Rick Norlock:** Mr. Speaker, back in the mid to late 1970s, I too used a family member to help raise my two boys when my wife and I were working. I too hired a trusted friend at \$20 a day, which many of my friends said was a huge amount of money, but a caring, loving friend, relative or neighbour is in my view a choice that I made and that everyone can make. I just want the hon. member to know that some of the statistics I have read indicate that if one out of—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** My apologies to the member for Northumberland—Quinte West.

[*Translation*]

It being 6:33 p.m., pursuant to order made Tuesday, April 4, 2006, the House stands adjourned to Monday, April 24, 2006 at 11 a.m., pursuant to Standing Orders 28(2) and 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:33 p.m.)







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