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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, June 6, 2006

—
Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, June 6, 2006

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)

[English]

ORDER IN COUNCIL APPOINTMENTS

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 am pleased to table, in both official languages, a number of Order in Council appointments which were made by the government.

Pursuant to the provisions of Standing Order 110(1), these are deemed referred to the appropriate standing committees, a list of which is attached.

* * *

CANADA BUSINESS CORPORATIONS ACT

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-317, An Act to amend the Canada Business Corporations Act (qualification of auditor).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce the bill regarding the Canada Business Corporations Act dealing with the independence of the auditors.

White collar crime is very much a blue collar issue and we must be able to trust the financial statements of the companies where our pension plans are invested.

The bill would state that if one is the auditor for a company one should not be selling any other financial services to that same company. In other words, one should not be auditing one's own work. In this way people would have more confidence in the financial statements of the companies where our union plans and so on invest.

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

PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION REVIEW ACT

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-318, An Act to provide for a House of Commons committee to study proportional representation in federal elections.

He said: Mr. Speaker, the purpose of the bill is to move forward the idea of electoral reform by designating a standing committee to deal with the subject of whether Canada wants to change its electoral system to a system of proportional representation.

The bill is to advance an idea in which many Canadians are interested and it would be a legislative framework through which we could realistically study the idea of do we or do we not want to change our electoral system.

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

* * *

ENERGY PRICE COMMISSION ACT

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-319, An Act to establish the Energy Price Commission.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am sure you would be the first to agree that Canadians are horrified at the burgeoning or the blossoming prices of energy. Many Canadians have an instinctive feeling that they are being gouged at the pumps over energy pricing.

The bill seeks to create a national energy price commission whereby the energy companies would have to come to that commission to justify why these increases in energy costs are justified.

The price commission would also be able to set the price of oil and gas for a period of not more than six months so that users, small businesses and trucking companies, could have some stability in the energy pricing and are not rattled by these erratic, seemingly arbitrary, fluctuations in prices.

The national energy price commission would be struck by government to monitor, oversee and, in fact, yes, regulate the energy costs for oil, gas, diesel, et cetera.

Government Orders

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

* * *

•(1005)

PETITIONS

JUSTICE

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present in the House today a petition compiled by the mother of Kempton Howard, a youth worker who was murdered in my community in 2003.

The petition relates to sentencing issues and expresses the deep concern of citizens who knew Kempton and a broader community with regard to the need for justice in our criminal law.

CANADA POST

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition was put together by postal workers and community members who are very concerned that the federal government is allowing Canada Post to close post offices in spite of a moratorium on closures in rural and small towns. Public post offices connect communities throughout our vast land and help us to overcome differences and distances. They play a key role in the economic and social life of our communities and are part of our infrastructure.

The petition calls upon the Government of Canada to instruct Canada Post to maintain, expand and improve its network of post offices rather than close them down.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure to stand again and present more petitions. They are flooding into my office from people concerned about the abandonment of child care in Canada.

Not only do the petitioners not believe in the allowance the government is proposing but they believe it discriminates against the least fortunate in favour of the most fortunate in many circumstances and income categories. They want to express their concern through these petitions in the House today.

[*Translation*]

RAIL SERVICE

Mr. Raynald Blais (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today I am tabling a petition on behalf of people from the riding of Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine and people throughout Quebec. They are calling on the federal government to do what is needed to ensure that the passenger and freight rail services are maintained and improved in the Gaspé Peninsula, which includes buying the Matapédia-Chandler line and Via Rail's capital budget and operational budget.

* * *

[*English*]

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 it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2006

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-13, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on May 2, 2006, as reported (without amendment) from the committee.

Hon. Vic Toews (for the Minister of Finance) moved that the bill be concurred in.

(Motion agreed to)

•(1010)

Hon. Vic Toews (for the Minister of Finance) moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the third time and passed)

* * *

CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed from June 5 consideration of the motion that Bill C-10, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (minimum penalties for offences involving firearms) and to make a consequential amendment to another Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Ms. Diane Ablonczy: Mr. Speaker, I know how early it is in the day and how often the faces in the seats keep changing but this is the beginning of third reading debate on the budget implementation bill. We have had the bill introduced. We had second reading debate. The bill went to committee. The committee studied the bill and referred the bill back to the House. Now we are on the last leg of debate on the budget implementation bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. There seems to be some confusion in the House. It is my understanding that the bill to which the hon. member is speaking is Bill C-13 which was just passed. We have now moved to debate on Bill C-10. Is the member speaking to Bill C-10?

Ms. Diane Ablonczy: No, Mr. Speaker. I was just advised about the change of plans so I will let someone else add to the wisdom of the House.

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate on Bill C-10.

Hon. John McCallum: Mr. Speaker, I thought it was the intention of the House and of all parties to debate third reading of Bill C-13 at this time.

The Deputy Speaker: It may have been the intention of some members but before I took the Chair I observed what I thought to be the passage of Bill C-13 without any dissent, or division for that matter. I believe the matter has now been decided.

Government Orders

Hon. John McCallum: Mr. Speaker, it was my understanding, although I may be wrong, that it was the report stage the House passed and that we would now be entering into debate on third reading.

The Deputy Speaker: Apparently both were done. The Speaker did call for debate when the question was put on third reading and no one rose. The question was then put on third reading and the bill was carried without dissent or division. It sometimes happens in the House that the intentions people have do not always fully manifest themselves.

We are now in debate on Bill C-10 and we will resume debate with the hon. member for Abbotsford.

Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise in the House today to speak to Bill C-10. This is a bill that will improve the safety of all Canadians by ensuring that violent criminals who use firearms to commit their offences will receive serious prison time, consistent with the gravity of their offence.

This bill addresses two groups of offences. The one group involves offences in which a firearm is used in the commission of another crime, namely, the so-called “use offences”. The second group involves the possession of illegal firearms, namely, the “non-use offences”.

Let me deal with the first group. Bill C-10 would impose mandatory minimum penalties where a gun is used in the commission of a serious Criminal Code offence. These offences would include attempted murder, discharge of a firearm with intent, sexual and aggravated sexual assault, kidnapping, hostage taking, robbery, extortion, et cetera.

If a restricted or prohibited weapon is used in the commission of any of those offences or if such guns are used in relation to gang activity, a first time offender will receive an automatic five year prison sentence. Penalties will escalate to 7 and 10 years depending on the number of prior offences for the same or similar gun crime.

Clearly, this bill targets repeat and violent offenders who must be kept off the street for the good of our communities. It also provides a deterrent to youths who are involved in gangs, forcing them to weigh the consequences of their actions before engaging in crime.

The second group of offences involves the illegal possession of a restricted or prohibited firearm. Some of the offences targeted include the unauthorized possession of a restricted or prohibited firearm with ammunition, firearms trafficking, stealing a firearm, possession of a firearm for the purpose of trafficking in drugs, making an automatic firearm, or perhaps firearms smuggling. For these non-use offences, an offender would receive one year in prison, which escalates to three years where there is one prior use or non-use conviction, and up to five years in prison if the offender has more than one prior use or non-use conviction.

Among other things, this legislation is aimed directly at the gun trafficking industry. Virtually all gang related crimes we see across Canada are committed not by those who purchase guns legally and register them, but by people who purchase firearms illegally on the black markets or steal them from legitimate gun owners.

In my home province of British Columbia, it is estimated that gang related shootings or murders occur, on average, at least once every month. The rate of increase in gang activity in B.C. is astonishing. Most of it is fuelled by the drug trade, mainly in high grade marijuana, and carried out by young people with illegal firearms who have complete disregard for the safety and lives of those around them. This legislation will not only send a clear message that gun activity will have serious consequences, but it will also take these criminals off the streets for longer periods of time.

To place this in context, I would like to give several examples of some of the crimes that have recently been committed in British Columbia. In December of 2005, Laurie Tinga was seriously wounded by a stray bullet while watching television in her home. The 40 year old woman was the victim of a shootout in her townhouse courtyard in Port Moody. Police had reason to believe the gun battle was the result of a drug deal gone sour.

In October of 2005, two gang members were gunned down in Vancouver at a Vietnamese restaurant. Police believed it was a targeted attack carried out by rival gang members.

Just last month at another Vancouver restaurant, one customer died and another was critically wounded after a man with a gun attempted to rob an Asian restaurant. When the patrons of this restaurant attempted to stop the robbery, the gunman opened fire.

These gun crimes are occurring across the country at an alarming rate. What is more alarming is that too often innocent residents are caught in the crossfire.

● (1015)

I want to stress that the bill does not represent an across the board increase in mandatory minimum sentences. Rather, it targets crimes that are specifically related to gang activity, repeat and violent offenders.

This new legislation is especially good news for my constituency of Abbotsford, which for the past number of years has seen a dramatic increase in guns, gangs and gun related violence. The proliferation of marijuana grow ops and crystal meth labs in my community has meant a significant increase in gangs and organized crime.

As is common across Canada, our Abbotsford police force simply does not have the resources to locate and tear down every marijuana grow op or crystal meth lab. The ones they do manage to destroy are quickly replaced with others.

Since Abbotsford shares a border with the United States, it is part of a complex web of organized crime on the Lower Mainland. Drugs such as high grade marijuana are regularly exchanged for firearms from the U.S. These are the same firearms that are being used to commit the wide range of gang related crimes we are witnessing across Canada.

Government Orders

Although both American and Canadian border security officials are quite vigilant in protecting our borders and stopping the cross-border gun trade, there is only so much they can do when the same people go to prison for short periods of time and are turned back onto the streets only to take up crime once again.

The gun and drug trades are quite lucrative industries and lure a number of young people into the gang lifestyle. These mandatory minimum penalties under Bill C-10 will go a long way in discouraging youths from taking up this behaviour, but this government is also concerned with preventing young people, through community initiatives, from becoming involved in a life of crime in the first place.

In our first federal budget, this government invested \$20 million in a plan for communities. This money will be focused on preventing youth crime and helping young people stay away from guns and gangs. I believe that both this bill and our prevention initiatives will work together to reduce the number of gun related deaths in Canada.

If we do not send a clear message to criminals that the consequences will now far outweigh the benefits of using handguns to carry out crime, gun violence will continue to increase. The clear message we are sending is this: be prepared to go to prison if a serious gun offence is committed, period.

I believe these penalty schemes will also be an important tool for police, who must place themselves in potentially deadly situations on a daily basis. The police will now be able to know that should the courts send an offender to prison for committing a firearms offence, that is not an offender they will be encountering back on the streets for a very long time.

About a week ago, three people, including an Abbotsford resident, were charged with abducting a young woman at gunpoint and assaulting her in Mission.

Also, on the same day, two men were charged with attempted murder in Abbotsford after a man was found shot and beaten in his home on Mt. Lehman Road. What a shame. What a shameful loss of life.

Abbotsford resident Roger McCormick was shot seven times, five times in the head, when a group of three men wearing balaclavas and black vests invaded his home with guns in search of marijuana. His wife was actually killed in that offence.

In January 2004, two Abbotsford youths, 18 and 20 years old, were gunned down on the sidewalk and seriously injured on Montvue Street.

In February 2004, the second nightclub shooting in less than a month occurred in Abbotsford. Two men entered an establishment carrying concealed handguns and opened fire. Luckily, the targets of the shots escaped injury.

In August 2005, a 24 year old Abbotsford man sitting in his car was struck by bullets fired by a man in an adjacent park.

I could go on, but I think it is clear that my community has a serious gun problem. I believe Canada has a serious gun problem.

In order to end the cycle of gun violence, this government is committed to fulfilling our election promise to get tough on serious criminals. We owe nothing less to the Canadian public than to protect them to the fullest. I believe Bill C-10 is the way to do that.

Effective deterrents, including escalating mandatory minimum jail terms, are an important step in reducing crime on our streets. So is choking off the supply of illegal handguns. By addressing both problems, we will save lives.

• (1020)

British Columbians and residents of Abbotsford are tired of watching criminals execute violence and get off with a slap on the wrist. Finally we have a government that is committed to the right of law-abiding citizens to live in safety and security. That is a promise we made during the election. This bill delivers on that promise.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened closely to my hon. colleague and I do not share his opinion whatsoever.

Before I was elected in 2004, I worked as a defence lawyer and criminal lawyer for 20 years. I saw the arrival of additional sentences for crimes committed while in possession of a gun. These penalties are now four years. We went from one year to three and then four years. Unless my colleague opposite has more recent information, we do not have any studies that show that the increase in minimum sentences for gun-related crimes has reduced crime. If my colleague has any studies on the matter, I would like him to table them in this House.

If this bill passes, how will my colleague reduce what is referred to in Canada as plea bargaining? Let us say that I am a defence lawyer and my client is charged with a gun crime. What will we do? We will push the procedure to the maximum, as far as possible. We will ask the Crown to drop the gun possession charge in exchange for a guilty plea to a charge of assault with a weapon instead of attempted murder, for example. That does not solve anything.

If so much is to be resolved with this bill, why did the hon. Minister of Justice forget to include hunting rifles and shotguns in this bill? That is my question. We have studies that show that crimes committed over the past few years, in rural areas, were committed with rifles and shotguns. Why did the government fail to include rifles and shotguns in its bill?

• (1025)

[*English*]

Mr. Ed Fast: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from the hon. member, although I am not going to speak for the justice minister, who can certainly speak for himself. I will say, though, that I believe the member and I differ dramatically on whether mandatory minimum sentences in fact are going to make a difference. There is significant research, especially in different jurisdictions within the United States, that mandatory minimum sentences do have a very positive impact on the reduction of crime, especially violent crime and gun related crime.

Government Orders

I would also refer the hon. member to the fact that even members of the judiciary have commented on the fact that they are concerned with the sentences that are being levied. I refer him to one particular report, which incidentally just came out on June 3, a couple of days ago, in the *Vancouver Sun*, in which provincial court judge Carol Baird Ellan actually expressed surprise that “even repeat offenders don’t often get stiff prison time in B.C.” She indicated that she was “bound by precedent and recommendations from experienced lawyers” in sentencing a 36 year old woman who had robbed a restaurant. In fact, this adult had a record, a cornucopia of convictions: theft, forgery, being unlawfully at large, possession of a weapon, robbery, aggravated assault, assaulting a police officer, drug trafficking, and possession.

However, said the judge, “her hands were legally bound”. The article states that “instead of five years of imprisonment, Baird Ellan last week handed a sometimes-violent woman with a long record only 22 months in jail for a terrifying abduction and robbery”. That is the problem Canadians face. It is a problem in my community. It may not be a problem in the hon. member’s community, but it certainly is in the rest of Canada. This bill specifically addresses that problem.

Hon. Charles Hubbard (Miramichi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again I listened with interest to the hon. member. In fact, in his maiden speech, he also referred to problems in his area that were mainly drug related.

In terms of the bill, we are dealing almost entirely with firearms, but there are many other ways in which people are assaulted. They are assaulted with knives and also today with syringes, which people use in the drug trade and which may contain AIDS. All of these are also assaults on individuals. Could the hon. member comment briefly? We are dealing mainly with firearms, but the root cause of a lot of the problems that he refers to is the drug trade in his area.

We do not have mandatory sentencing for a lot of the drug trade, but should that also be included in terms of mandatory sentences for those who are involved with second and third offences for the sale and growing of marijuana?

● (1030)

Mr. Ed Fast: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the spirit in which that question was raised.

I would suggest to the member that this bill is a very good start. When restricted and prohibited weapons are being used, almost always it is the case that they are being used for illegal purposes, whether it is simply a possession issue or whether it is an actual use situation where they are being used in the commission of a crime. My suggestion to him is that this is a good first step in moving forward and addressing some of the elements that are used in committing a crime.

Guns, especially illegal guns, the ones that are prohibited and restricted, should not be in the hands of individuals in Canada. When they are used in a crime, they are obviously used for the purpose of hurting and killing people.

I would encourage the member and his party to support this legislation. If other legislation, for example against the use of knives, is warranted, we would be pleased to consider that. I would

encourage him to consider this bill as the first step in toughening up some of these laws to make sure Canadians are safe going forward.

Mr. Rob Moore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my hon. colleague on his speech.

We have heard some criticism from those who at this time would not like to get tougher on gang violence and crime. I want to quote from the Liberal platform in the last election:

A Liberal government will re-introduce legislation to crack down on violent crimes and gang violence, and to double the mandatory minimum sentences for serious gun-related crimes.

The NDP platform said it would:

Increase the mandatory minimum penalty for possession, sale and importation of illegal arms such as hand guns, assault rifles and automatic weapons.

We should flavour the comments from across the way with the fact that when there was recent criminal activity, those members were in favour of mandatory minimums. They were in favour of mandatory minimums during the election, but now after the election they are backing away from that position.

I am wondering if the member would comment on the need to be steadfast when we are dealing with an ongoing problem like the gun crimes we are seeing in Toronto. Gang related crimes are by and large being committed with handguns. Perhaps the member would comment on the need for us to maintain our positions and to send a message that as a government, in a non-partisan way, none of us is going to tolerate criminals and gang members using handguns to commit crimes on city streets.

Mr. Ed Fast: Mr. Speaker, as I recall, the last time we were addressing conditional sentencing reform in this House, there was a member opposite who suggested that we do not have a crime problem in Canada and that the status quo was acceptable. I am not sure that is reflected in the party opposite. My feeling is there are members opposite who are seriously considering the legislation before the House and who will support it simply because it is a commitment they made, it is sensible and it is supported by Canadians across this country.

Crime is a serious problem in Canada. When Canadians are polled, they concur in that assessment. It is not only a perception; the facts bear it out. Serious violent crimes and repeat offences are on the rise, despite the contention of some of the members opposite.

It is true that we need to be steadfast. We cannot simply sit on our duffs and do absolutely nothing. This government is committed to follow through on its promises. We were elected on a platform of change. One of the five priorities was to move forward with mandatory minimum sentences. We are going to deliver on that promise.

Hon. Roy Cullen (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in this discussion on mandatory minimum sentences.

Government Orders

It was our Liberal government that tabled a number of changes to the laws to deal with the recent increase in gun related crime. My riding of Etobicoke North has been faced with a lot of that type of activity. Unfortunately, we have had a lot of drug related and gang related crime. A little over 100 people were arrested in a police bust in Rexdale in my riding recently. They were allegedly involved with guns, drugs and trafficking and many other horrendous crimes. I was pleased to see them arrested. The justice system will now have to process those individuals and determine their guilt or innocence.

There has been far too much gun related crime in Toronto. That is why I supported our government's tabling of an increase in mandatory minimum sentences and a whole package of measures designed to deal with the increase in gun violence.

My colleague on this side of the House made a very interesting point. We are dealing with gun violence here, but in many other cities in Canada a gun is not the weapon of choice. I am told that in cities like Regina knives seem to be the weapon of choice. Nonetheless, I am certainly prepared to support in the first instance some measures to counteract gun violence.

What members opposite have not been taking into account significantly enough in my judgment is that we need to deal with this issue with a broadly based holistic approach. Our approach included putting more money into our national crime prevention program which works very well.

There are a number of community based programs in my riding where the objective is to try to reach young people. Many of them are from dysfunctional families, homes where one parent is working, homes where there is a history of abuse and violence. The programs provide them with an outlet after school where they can get involved in things like learning how to use a computer, basketball, arts and crafts, programs like that. The idea is to keep them away from the malls where they go after school and get involved with their peers in gangs and drugs and violence. They end up taking the wrong path instead of trying to become constructive members of our society. That is something we have stressed. Let me give the House an example.

In addition to the national crime prevention program that is under way in my riding, there is another program, Breaking the Cycle, which is funded by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. It works with young men and women who want to get out of a gang. It provides them with the support they need. It is very difficult to exit a gang because of the peer pressure. Besides trying to leave a gang, the young people may not have finished their schooling and may not be able to get a job.

The program is working very successfully. A graduation ceremony was held in January when 15 or so young people graduated. They are now taking the message out to their peers that they do not need to become members of a gang, that they can live productive and happy lives.

That is part and parcel of the integrated approach that our Liberal government proposed. It is not just a matter of locking up people and throwing away the key. We have to get tougher and I am supportive of tougher measures, but the measures have to align themselves with

the charter. A provision in the charter says that the penalty must match the crime.

I will certainly be studying the bill before us today. I know the committee will be studying it, as will my colleagues who are more intimately involved with the review. I have to wonder if the provisions that have been tabled will meet the charter test because without that, we are wasting our time. We can pass all the laws we want, but they will be rejected when they are challenged under the charter, because the penalty will not match the crime.

● (1035)

Our former Liberal government introduced measures and indicated we would introduce measures before the opposition parties brought on the election. We could have had these laws passed today if there had not been an election. The legislation had been tabled and the policies announced to improve our witness protection programs.

I recall talking to the Chief of Police in Toronto, Mr. Blair, who is doing a fine job of trying to deal with some of the criminality in Toronto. He said, "We do not need programs to ship a whole number of people down to South America for plastic surgery and the like. We have some of those programs. We need programs to help people testify anonymously with the protection of the court". We had worked with the various judicial authorities to bring that into play.

In my riding of Etobicoke North crimes are being committed but people are not coming forward with information. The police know there are witnesses. The police know that people know who committed the crimes but the police cannot get them to volunteer the information. In some cases we understand why they cannot. People are petrified of coming forward. Even though there are anonymous toll-free numbers, people will not come forward. I am glad to see that in the last while more people are coming forward.

We had proposed some enhanced witness protection programs. We also had proposed the reverse onus on bail.

What I hear in my riding of Etobicoke North is that when young people are arrested for dealing in drugs and maybe having an illegal gun, they go to the courts and they are released on bail and in some cases they reoffend.

We had proposed a reverse onus and it had some support. If a person committed a gun crime, the burden of proof would be on the individual who has been arrested to demonstrate to the court that he or she should be released on bail. It would not be the other way, where the burden of proof is on the court to show that the person should not be released on bail. That is something else that we had proposed. I do not know where that is in terms of the Conservative government proposals.

Government Orders

I was very proud that the prime minister at the time, the member for LaSalle—Émard, came to my riding of Etobicoke North and announced that we were going to ban handguns. In the political context of Canada at the time, that was a courageous move. I am sure he knew that the announcement of a ban on handguns might not reverberate very well in parts of rural Canada where guns have become a religion in some cases. He did that and I was very pleased. I can say that it reverberated very well in my riding of Etobicoke North where handguns have become a very big problem.

Some argue that this is the Liberal approach to dealing with gun violence, to ban handguns. Unfortunately that is how the media portrayed it. They conveniently forgot, as did the opposition parties, that the ban on handguns was a part of a whole package of policy initiatives, some of which I have just described: mandatory minimums; looking at witness protection; looking at reverse onus; looking at enhancing our community based programming. The media and the opposition parties said this was the Liberal approach, banning handguns, and they said that the contribution would be minimal.

I would have to admit that banning handguns would provide only a marginal benefit. I would concede that point. But when we are talking about human beings being gunned down in our streets, if we are able to save one life or two lives, then it is worthwhile.

I do know that banning handguns would have had a negative impact on gun collectors. Those people were the primary group who would have been disadvantaged, and it would have been unfortunate. I do not think the Conservative government is going to bring in a ban on handguns, so I am talking about it in the past tense. I think that is a fair assumption to work on.

● (1040)

However, some of the collectors who have purchased handguns totally legally have registered them, totally legally have been licensed to own a gun, and they have stored them in the legal way that they are supposed to. The reality is that in Toronto and perhaps in other municipal centres these criminals know where the guns are. They go in and use dynamite or whatever it takes to get these guns.

We know from statements made by Mayor David Miller and Police Chief Blair in Toronto that many of those handguns were used and have been used in violent crimes in the city of Toronto. So, is it not worthwhile to deal with that particular issue?

We know that handguns that are being used for crime are not registered by criminals. I think this is the point that really frustrates me. It fits within the Conservative Party's set of values to attack the Liberal Party in the sense that the gun registry was supposed to solve the problems with violent crime and gun crimes. The Liberal government never made such a claim. It would be laughable to make that claim.

What we do know for sure is that the police chiefs support the gun registry. Some of the rank and file police officers do not like it but on balance the Canadian Professional Police Association passed a resolution and it supports the gun registry. It supports the gun registry because there are about 5,000 enquiries each and every day from law enforcement people across this great country to the gun registry. Police officers find it a useful tool.

Is it the tool that is going to end gun violence in Canada? Let us be serious. Of course, we know that it is not going to eliminate gun violence in Canada but it is a useful tool.

We would think that the Conservatives would understand economics but they do not. There is a concept in economics called sunk cost. It did cost more than it should have to build the gun registry system. Over a number of years, the total if we add it all up over many years, the development costs are pushing a billion dollars. It could have cost less. There are reasons for that which most Canadians understand now and that is the way that the project was conceived and designed.

We think that cost overruns on major systems development projects are something unique to the Canada Firearms Centre or to the federal government in terms of the gun registry. Believe me, I have seen in the private sector more megasystems projects blown in terms of their budgets that we can shake a stick at.

Does it make it right? Of course not. When we get into a megasystems development project, we can have problems. We can have problems because we do not define the business processes clearly enough, we do not lock into place the policy quickly enough, and we may have a moving target which starts to escalate into cost overruns.

We also know that there are many gun users in Canada who deliberately tried to subvert the gun registry by submitting forms which they knew were wrong and then getting them back and forth, so they had to reconfirm them and reconfirm them. This was a deliberate step to overburden the Canada Firearms Centre with a lot of extra work. We know that this was a mischievous thing that was done.

That does not explain the whole issue of the cost overruns in the gun registry but the point I am getting at is that it is a sunk cost. Whatever has been spent to build the gun registry, the money is gone. We cannot bring it back.

Therefore the question is this. Is the gun registry serving any useful purpose today? Is it being managed in a fiscally responsible way? The answer to both those questions, and I hear my colleagues who have the right answer, is yes. It is because the costs have been managed down now to an annual operating cost of around \$20 million a year. That is the cost of operating the gun registry.

● (1045)

The members opposite often get mixed up or deliberately try to confuse Canadians about gun licensing. I know that they are not thinking about disbanding the gun licensing. I hope they are not talking about that because individuals who want to buy a gun must go through a police check, determine if they are stable enough to own a gun, and then they get a licence if they are successful in that.

The Canadian Firearms Centre has rejected about 8,000 applications over the last few years because the people had some record of criminality or violence in the past, so presumably we should not get rid of licensing.

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If we look at the total cost of the Canadian Firearms Centre, the annual cost of operating it is around \$80 million, of which \$20 million is for the gun registry. The other \$60 million is for the licensing. There are 5,000 enquiries per day from law enforcement officers. Where they find it useful, and I know the members opposite know this, is particularly on domestic violence calls. They go onto the gun registry and it helps them because they know that if there are guns registered then they have a different problem if they are going to that domestic violence call.

Of course some would say that some people have not registered their guns. They should give police the benefit of the doubt. They are intelligent people. They know that if they go onto the gun registry and they do not see any guns registered at that home, it is not a slam dunk case that there are no guns there because the guns could be there illegally and not registered. This is not rocket science.

The point is that it is a tool and it is a useful tool. The police, rather than these armchair quarterbacks, are in the trenches day in and day out. They know what works. They know what is of value to them. How can these armchair quarterbacks decide what is a useful tool for the police and what is not? The police support the gun registry.

Conveniently, the Conservatives are saying that they will only eliminate the long gun registry. Well that is convenient because long guns happen to fit into the profile of the people who support them in their constituencies.

They say they will still register the handguns, but here is an interesting fact. I think I heard a misquote in this House earlier that long guns are responsible for more murder and suicides in Canada than handguns. One might say that does not sound right. Intuitively that sounds wrong, that handguns are the problem.

The point is that we know that in rural parts of Canada there are a lot of long guns around. Some of them are needed for hunting or whatever, and in many cases they could be registered, but the point is that in cases of domestic violence or suicides, people use these long guns to commit these crimes.

For the Conservative Party to conveniently say it is not going to register long guns, which we know politically is a very beneficial position for it to take, ignores the fact that long guns are involved in a lot of crime and criminality in Canada as well, so it is not a very good solution.

The point I want to make is that we must ensure that laws meet the test of the charter. We must deal with mandatory minimums, but we must deal with a whole suite of solutions. That includes local people and communities taking responsibility.

I am glad to see that in my riding of Etobicoke North, the local churches and community groups are saying that they have to take some personal responsibility and get involved in gun-related violence. We are seeing that happen. It cannot all be government. It has to be the people and their families. It has to start in the churches, in the gurdwaras, in the temples, in the mosques and in the synagogues. It has to start in the schools and in the homes.

We incarcerate people for a long period of time and when they come out, they are criminals again, so let us look at this in a sensible

way and an intelligent way. I will certainly be interested to see if what is proposed today meets the test of the charter and whether it is going to get people off the streets who are using guns, who are involved in drugs and committing these violent crimes.

•(1050)

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know that the member was not present in the justice committee during the debate on the gun registry back in the 1990s. I do not think he was here yet. I would like him to know that we heard comments in the justice committee at that time regarding the gun registry and that is exactly what this bill was about.

That bill, Bill C-68, was a crime bill according to the Liberals. It was to fight crime and it was said that it would be successful in reducing crime, et cetera. The member said that is not the case. I can assure him that was the case. The minister at that time was Allan Rock and I can guarantee we heard that not only in the committee but in the House of Commons in a number of speeches. I want to correct him on that.

I agree with a number of things that he mentioned in regard to other programs that are required in order to curb crime. This has been the problem all along. During the years of my serving on the justice committee, we would constantly get omnibus bills from the Liberal government with all kinds of different things in it. Some things could be supported and some could not. I do not know what kind of legislation the Liberals thought they could pass when some of it was okay and some of it was not. It reminds me of when I was a kid and my mother used to put sugar in the medicine to make it go down.

As far as I am concerned and as far as the Conservative Party is concerned, we think we need to stick to the issue, which is: what are we going to do about those who are convicted of gun crimes? I applaud the justice minister in keeping it to that point. We will move in the direction of all these other issues as time progresses.

The member also said that the penalty should match the crime. This is my main point, that the penalty should match the crime. That is what the charter of rights says, according to the member. That is what it says it must do. I would like to know from the member, who should determine that? Should it be the Liberal lawyers, judges, or maybe it should be the House of Commons, the representatives of the people of Canada?

That is where the Liberal government always fell down. It wanted to throw it into the hands of lawyers and the courts, the decisions of what penalty should match a crime. The Canadian citizens should decide what that penalty should be. Does the member agree with that statement and if not, why not?

•(1055)

Hon. Roy Cullen: Mr. Speaker, I know the member for Wild Rose has been in the House for a while. It is true that I was elected in 1996 and at that time the gun law had already been passed, but I supported it nonetheless.

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The member makes the same classic mistake or deliberately tries to mislead Canadians by saying that the gun registry was positioned as something that was going to solve gun crime. I am sure the minister at the time, Mr. Rock, never said that. If the member for Wild Rose has copies of *Hansard* he would like to produce that show the former Minister of Justice at the time saying that the gun registry was going to solve the problem of gun crime, I would very much like to see it because he did not say that, I am sure.

The second question the member asked surprised me as he has been around here for a while. With regard to the issue of whether the penalty fits the crime, ultimately if Parliament passes certain laws and are challenged in the courts, perhaps up to the Supreme Court of Canada, it will be the courts that decide whether the punishment fits the crime.

An hon. member: Should it be that way?

Hon. Roy Cullen: The thing the member should remember is that the Constitution was repatriated some years ago with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The only option available to Parliament then would be to override that and use the notwithstanding clause, something I would not support. I do not think it was designed for the federal government to override the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to give the member for Etobicoke North a moment to perhaps correct a comment he made in one of his speeches. It has been recently noted that the Liberal Party of Canada has started to look more like the Liberal Party of Toronto. We saw it no more than in both the leadership race and the former prime minister's announcement. In the middle of the campaign he announced, on the fly, that he would do something he knew was outright impossible. That was the banning of handguns.

The member made a comment at mid-point in his speech. He said that in rural Canada, a place that I represent proudly as a New Democrat, guns were a religion. Is this a registered religion or is there some kind of undertone within his speech to denigrate or put down Canadians who live in rural Canada?

A study was done last year in my region. Ten to one are the dollars that we send to Ottawa versus what we get back. This research was done by the Parliamentary Library. There is incredible support for his city and other cities across this region. I find it both offensive and absolutely wrong when I hear that guns are somehow a religion in a place I represent. This must be corrected with haste.

My primary question is with respect to first nations. A lot of commentary has been made about minimum mandatory sentencing and the impact it will have on the population in our prisons. Has the member seen anything from the government or from his own party to help alleviate the overburdening of prisons with first nations populations?

• (1100)

Hon. Roy Cullen: Mr. Speaker, I do not know if the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley has a problem with religion. Perhaps he would like to apologize to the House later for drawing that inference.

Skeena—Bulkley Valley is an area where long guns are what people like. His constituents love to hear him say what he has said.

Members will notice that the member did not challenge the fact that long guns are responsible for more murders and suicides in Canada than handguns. He conveniently sidestepped that. Maybe his researcher has not done the homework, or maybe he is conveniently ignoring that fact.

We need to look at the interests of all Canadians. We should look at what is best for Canada and what will reduce the levels of criminality, even though over the last many years there has been a decline in criminality in Canada. However, there has been a spike in some of the violent crimes. In cities such as Toronto there have been more violent crimes.

In my riding this weekend, following the arrests of the people were alleged to have been involved in terrorist activities, the International Muslims Organization mosque was vandalized by people who presumably were taking some revenge. We do not know the motivation. We do not know who did it. This is the kind of hatred we need to fight in Canada. We want to ensure that, in this particular context, the punishment indeed fits the crime in minimum mandatory sentences and that it passes the charter test.

To pass a law in Parliament, knowing that it could be struck down or will be struck down, is a waste of time. I will be very interested to know the balance. I will support increasing mandatory minimums, but it must meet the charter test. It must be able to go through the courts and successfully fight off any challenges that might occur.

Mr. Rob Moore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to hear some of the comments and speeches from other members and also some of the questions and answers. It is quite enlightening.

I am delighted to have the opportunity to speak to this very significant bill. It is a bill that is in keeping with the campaign and election commitments made by the Conservative Party of Canada to Canadians.

We said that we would toughen up the laws on crime, target crime and criminals in an effective and efficient manner. We said that we would bring in penalties that would send a message to gangs, to those who preyed on citizens and to those who used handguns in the commission of violent offences. We said that we, as a Canadian society and as a Parliament, would not tolerate that any more.

Bill C-10 proposes escalating minimum penalties that are specifically tailored to the nature of the current gun crime problem in Canada.

Just to correct the record, the member mentioned that handguns were not a significant part of the problem and that somehow long guns were. This legislation targets handgun crimes. Sixty-five per cent of homicides in Canada are committed with handguns. The vast majority of those handguns are illegal guns. They are unregistered and many of them are smuggled in to Canada by gangs.

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It is suggested somehow that we should continue targeting law-abiding hunters, gun collectors and farmers. For 10 years we have lived with the gun registry, a Liberal scheme which targeted law-abiding citizens rather than criminals, and this is a ridiculous assertion.

This is aggressive and decisive legislation. It uses appropriate and adequate measures. It is aimed at curbing gang and gun violence, particularly crimes committed with handguns.

The bill is not directed at law-abiding firearm owners or aboriginal Canadians who use firearms for hunting or target shooting. Frankly, it is a refreshing approach. We have a crime problem. The proposed bill targets criminals who continue to use firearms in the commission of serious crimes.

I am very pleased the government has taken action to get tougher on serious firearms offenders. I am certain that many Canadians feel, as I do, that our gun control laws should be directed at those who use firearms for criminal purposes and not at hunters and farmers who use firearms for legitimate purposes.

The approach taken in Bill C-10 is appropriately directed at the gun crime problem. Bill C-10 proposes tough criminal sanctions for those who commit serious firearms offences, with significantly tougher mandatory minimum penalties for those who have a criminal record that includes serious firearms offences. We are sending the message through this that if a person continues to offend, there will be escalating consequences.

The escalating minimum penalties depend on the nature and level of seriousness of the offence. For a series of serious use offences, enhanced minimum penalties will apply when one of two aggravating factors is present.

The first possibility is whether a firearm was used in the commission of an offence that is linked to a criminal organization; that is a gang. Over the last few years in Toronto and elsewhere, we have seen a complete escalation of gang violence and gang members using handguns to victimize other Canadians.

The second aggravating factor is whether a restricted or prohibited firearm, such as a handgun, is used in the commission of that offence. If either of those factors is present in the commission of attempted murder, discharging a firearm with intent to injure a person or prevent arrest, sexual assault with a weapon, aggravated sexual assault, kidnapping, hostage taking, robbery or extortion, the following mandatory minimum penalties will apply.

• (1105)

Members will see that these are reasonable penalties in light of the offences I just named: five years on a first offence; seven years if the accused has on their criminal record a prior conviction entered in the last 10 years for having used a firearm in the commission of an offence; or 10 years if the accused has more than one prior use conviction. This is an escalating penalty for those who are repeat offenders.

For other serious offences in which a firearm was not used in its commission but involved firearms, different escalating mandatory minimum penalties would apply. These offences do not require the presence of aggravating factors such as the use of restricted or

prohibited firearms or a connection with organized crime. These escalating minimum penalties are based on repeat offending for the offences of: possession of a loaded, restricted or prohibited firearm; firearms trafficking; possession for the purpose of trafficking; making an automatic firearm; firearm smuggling; and a new offence of robbery where a firearm is stolen. This would apply to what the previous speaker talked about where gang members targeted legitimate firearm owners. The previous government's solution to that problem was to continue targeting law-abiding citizens, thereby further victimizing the victim. We are going to target these criminals and that is what we should be doing.

The following mandatory minimum penalties will apply in these cases: three years on a first offence; and five years if the accused has a prior conviction. For the offences of possession of a firearm obtained by crime, possession of a firearm contrary to a court order, a new offence of breaking and entering with intent to steal a firearm, using a firearm or imitation firearm in the commission of other indictable offences, the following mandatory minimum penalties will apply: one year on the first offence; three years if the accused has a prior conviction in the last 10 years for having used a firearm in the commission of an offence; or five years if the accused has more than one such conviction.

The firearm offences targeted in proposed Bill C-10 are very serious offences. It appropriately targets serious or repeat firearm offenders. It does so in a tough but measured way based on relevant aggravating factors. The bill aims at ensuring that appropriately tough sentences are imposed on gun offenders and that Canadians are protected from threats posed by gangs and the use of firearms.

Parliament is responsible for setting the range of penalties, both maximum and minimum penalties, which it considers appropriate for Criminal Code offences. Next to murder, the penalties for firearms offences are the harshest in the Criminal Code, particularly in regard to the application of minimum penalties.

Proposed Bill C-10 builds on the existing approach with respect to minimum penalties for firearms offences and it does so in a way that is consistent with existing sentencing principles.

The principles of sentencing set out in the Criminal Code provide that the fundamental purpose of sentencing is to contribute, along with crime prevention initiatives, to respect for the law and the maintenance of a just, peaceful and safe society by imposing just sanctions that have specified objectives. These objectives include denunciation, deterrence, separating offenders from society if necessary, rehabilitation and providing reparation to victims and communities. It is all too often that victims and communities are last on our list of priorities. The bill aims to move them into a priority and show Canadians that we take the concerns of victims and communities seriously. We will do what is necessary to ensure that victims are not re-victimized and that communities in Canada are safe.

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These objectives are also meant to promote acceptance of responsibility and acknowledgement of harm done to victims and communities.

Another important principle is that of proportionality. In other words, a sentence should be proportionate to the gravity of the offence and the degree of responsibility of the offender. When we speak about the principle of proportionality, full consideration must be given to both the gravity of the offences and the moral blameworthiness of an offender.

• (1110)

Bill C-10 readjusts the penalty ranges for a number of serious firearms offences to raise the lower end of the sentence that can be imposed. This is being done to specify that, compared to other crimes, serious and repeat gun crimes should be punishable by more severe sentences. I think Canadians have said overwhelmingly, and parliamentarians are listening, that this is the approach they want. They want us to take an approach that targets criminals, gun crimes and repeat offenders especially.

Violent gun crimes such as handgun robberies, supplying criminal gang members with illegal guns or attempting to kill gang rivals are the types of serious gun crimes being targeted by Bill C-10. Those who commit these types of offences are more morally blameworthy, as these crimes often take place in our communities, thus putting the greater public at risk. We also have seen tragic examples of this, where a conflict between gang members who may be from rival gangs has resulted in an innocent person being caught in the crossfire and being injured or even killed.

Much effort went into ensuring that the penalties proposed in Bill C-10 are appropriately tailored to the current gun crime problem. The highest levels of 10 years for using a firearm and five years for other serious firearms related offences will be applied to repeat firearms offences. The manner in which the highest minimum penalties will apply is intended to ensure that they do not result in grossly disproportionate sentences being handed down.

We must also note the other important principles of sentencing, including that of denunciation. Gun crimes are very serious offences, and I think everyone in this House acknowledges that, but this bill says it is appropriate that serious and, in particular, repeat firearm offenders be punished severely. Bill C-10 does not propose to amend the penalties for all firearm offences contained in the Criminal Code. It targets only serious firearm offences. Gun violence cannot be tolerated. Serious and repeat firearm offenders deserve to be punished in a manner that reflects the degree of condemnation our society considers appropriate for this kind of illegal and violent conduct.

Tougher mandatory minimum penalties not only serve to seriously denounce unlawful conduct; they also ensure that serious offenders are put behind bars for a long period of time. Longer sentences mean that violent offenders are prevented from continuing to harm our society and to injure innocent men, women and children with guns.

The separation of violent offenders from society is an important sentencing goal. The government is responsible, with other levels of government, for ensuring greater public safety and strengthening the criminal justice system. This law is our way of doing just that.

Police agencies in urban areas across Canada are noticing a recent escalation in certain types of firearm violence. These include drug trade and turf wars, gang related homicides, and an increasing proportion of firearm homicides being committed with handguns. The fact is that this proportion went from 27% in 1974 to 65% in 2004. Sixty-five per cent of homicides in Canada now are being committed with these handguns. Police are also noticing an increase in handgun robberies in some cities and in illegal handgun possession by gang members. All of these are targeted by Bill C-10.

The mandatory minimum penalties proposed by Bill C-10 have been carefully tailored to ensure that only those convicted of serious firearms offences or those who have a history of firearms offences are punished more severely. Furthermore, the specific aggravating factors of having used a handgun or other restricted or prohibited firearm, or of having committed the offence for the benefit of a criminal organization, are designed to ensure that the higher minimum penalties are appropriately targeted at the current problem with guns and gangs.

This bill is targeted at criminal gangs. Whether or not they are paying attention and will think twice before committing a serious crime with a firearm remains to be seen, but nonetheless we are going to send that message. It is appropriate for the government to send a clear message to deter those who would use a firearm to commit a crime. This bill does that. It sends a clear message.

• (1115)

Moreover, it is important to note that these minimum penalties are not being proposed as the only solution to the problem, as some in the opposition have suggested. The existence of minimum penalties alone is not enough to effectively deter offenders. Measures to help prevent crime before it happens are also needed in order to deter would-be firearm offenders.

The government has also announced that it will dedicate \$20 million specifically to programs that help keep young people away from guns, gangs and drugs.

Furthermore, in order to ensure the effectiveness of deterrent measures in legislation, the government will also invest in law enforcement to increase the police presence on the street. This also was addressed in the budget. The government has committed to putting more police on Canada's streets to tackle our gun crime, gun smuggling and drug trafficking problems.

It is this combination of strategic preventive measures, targeted law enforcement and tough punitive responses that will have the greatest impact on these crimes.

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Canadians have told us that they want us to get tough on crime and we have listened. Guns and gangs remain a public safety threat. This bill addresses that threat. Criminals are going to be held accountable. Sentences will match the severity of the crime. Violent and repeat firearm offenders will be off the streets so that they will be unable to reoffend. While these mandatory minimum sentences are indeed tough, they are founded on several of the key existing sentencing principles.

In conclusion, this bill seeks to ensure that effective and appropriate justice is administered to criminals and that all Canadians are protected from all manner of criminal threats, in particular from threats posed by gangs and the use of firearms. Implementation of this bill ensures that Canada's criminal justice system will be one in which Canadians can have trust and confidence.

• (1120)

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the justice critic pointed out that in certain cases mandatory minimums may in fact create circumstances where plea bargaining is more prevalent, and indeed, that people will get off with lesser sentences simply because the courts may feel this is inappropriate. There is a problem about the courts respecting the intent of mandatory minimum sentences.

I wonder if the member would care to share with the House any thoughts he has from the research that he has done about the effectiveness of the courts in terms of operating under a system where mandatory minimums already are in place.

Mr. Rob Moore: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker, what we are doing is putting in place clear directions to crown prosecutors and the courts that we as a Parliament and as a society take gun crime seriously. This is why we are putting these mandatory minimums in place. We believe that prosecutors and crown attorneys are going to hear this message and use these mandatory minimums effectively.

We have to remember that in the last election almost all parties proposed an increase in mandatory minimum penalties. We know that over the course of the last election and during the campaign there were some high profile handgun crimes and murders committed in some of our major cities. There was a reaction from some parties. This party is continuing to call for getting tough on those who, one, are using guns in the commission of gang related crimes and, two, are using restricted or prohibited firearms to commit those crimes.

We are sending a clear message. This message goes throughout all of society. It goes to the gang members, the legal system, the crown prosecutors and the judges, that Parliament, representing Canadian society, is saying it wants these sentences imposed when someone uses a handgun to commit an offence against another Canadian citizen. I think this bill is going to do that very effectively.

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have a very simple question for the speaker before me. In his opinion, why is the homicide rate in the United States three times higher than it is in Canada?

[English]

Mr. Rob Moore: Mr. Speaker, the United States is another country. My role as a member of Parliament is to work to make Canadian society safe. It is America's responsibility to deal with its problems.

This bill is a Canadian solution to what is a Canadian problem. For a long time in cities in Canada we have not had as much of a gang problem or as much of a handgun problem. Some people felt it could not happen in Canada. I would hope that if there is any lesson that can be learned from the last few years, and even from recent events, it is that it is not appropriate to ever say that something could not happen in Canada.

We are taking an approach which sends a message that we are going to be tough on criminals and tough on crime. We are not going to take the approach that was taken in the past in targeting law-abiding citizens. We are going to target criminals. That is exactly what this bill does. It is designed to make Canada safer, Canadian citizens safer and Canadian cities and rural communities safer.

Ms. Denise Savoie (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, whenever I have attended police board meetings in my city, I have heard the police repeatedly ask for more funding for more police to do preventative work on the street and more funding for youth initiatives to prevent youths from joining gangs in the first place. I do not see this bill achieving either of these goals.

Would the member explain why unrestricted firearms, most long guns and shotguns, were excluded from the legislation when we know that these firearms were largely involved in the murder of enforcement officers in the last few years?

• (1125)

Mr. Rob Moore: Mr. Speaker, as a matter of fact, as I mentioned in my speech, this bill is one component of our overall strategy to tackle crime.

As I also mentioned, our budget provides funding for more police officers. Increased numbers of front line police officers are going to be necessary to crack down on crime. We are doing that. We are increasing funding for police officers. We are providing funding for those very youth initiatives that the member mentioned. I also mentioned in my speech that funding for initiatives to prevent youth from getting involved in crime is also necessary.

We can make no mistake about this, though, in that another component of a crime prevention strategy has to be tough sentencing for those who ultimately make the decision that they are going to use a firearm in the commission of an offence. This bill is targeted specifically at those criminal offenders, those who partake in gang related activities. It is tailored toward the violent crimes that we saw taking place in Toronto, for example, where gangs were using handguns in the commission of offences.

As a matter of fact, there are mandatory minimum penalties in law. Once this bill is passed, the situation will be that there will be mandatory minimum penalties for the use of any type of firearm in the commission of an offence.

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Hon. Sue Barnes (London West, Lib.): Yes, Mr. Speaker, there are mandatory minimums already in law. Our government and previous governments before us put those mandatory minimums in there.

The point that my colleague from the party opposite made is a very important one. The reality is that the Conservatives have, with the organization of this bill, made mandatory minimums for long guns lower than the mandatory minimums for restricted weapons. That is a concern for many people.

I also want to ask this member a factual question. In his comments yesterday, the Minister of Justice directed us to Steven Levitt's studies in the *Journal of Law and Economics*, 1999, and the *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 2004, which show that there is a direct link between mandatory minimum penalties and a decline in crime rates and criminal behaviour.

The minister did not mention any other studies. I want to ask the parliamentary secretary if these are the two studies the government is principally relying upon. I do not know if there are any more that he would like to direct us to, but are these the two studies being relied upon, as mentioned by the Minister of Justice in this House yesterday to all members?

Mr. Rob Moore: Mr. Speaker, in response to the hon. member's question, the concern as to the application of this piece of legislation, to suggest that some people are concerned that one type of firearm or another is not included, someone could certainly bring forward any amendments to this piece of legislation.

The fact of the matter is, as I mentioned in my speech, we are targeting the gang violence in our big cities. Oftentimes, 65% of those crimes are being committed with handguns which would be restricted or prohibited weapons. That is very specifically what Canadians were seeing over the last few years. That is what the bill seeks to target. To be clear, after this bill is passed, mandatory minimums will be in place for all serious firearms offences, whether they be done with a long gun or a handgun.

With respect to the issue of studies, there are all types of jurisdictions, including our own, that have mandatory minimums for some offences. We are going to have to study the results coming out of those. To be clear, the Liberal Party and the NDP in the last election were proposing to toughen up mandatory minimum sentences. Presumably that also was based on their feeling that there was a need to get tougher and to send a deterrent message that there would be mandatory minimum sentences for the commission of gun crimes. The vast majority of MPs in this House ran under that very platform.

• (1130)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first, in this debate, we must remember that we are all pursuing the same objective, that of less crime and greater security. We differ in our opinions of how to achieve it.

Next, it is important to say that no solution will guarantee less crime, but there may be one that would ensure more. The criminal approach is of necessity complex, because the reasons people commit crimes vary, and the crimes are not of the same type either.

Frankly, I do not think there are people here who would likely turn to a life of crime. We must avoid comparing their psychology to our own. That too is important.

I have practised law since 1966. The job I sought to begin my career was not available in 1966. So it was by chance that I ended up in criminal law, without ever thinking I would be working in that area. My professor of criminal law, who became assistant deputy minister, wanted to hire four new young people as law counsel in the office of the crown attorney, on their completion of university. I found this fascinating work as soon as I started it. I stayed in it for the rest of my career. Then I worked one year with the provincial crown and six months with the federal crown. Private firms came after me, and I opened my own office shortly after.

From the outset, I wondered why people commit crimes. First I noticed that, almost without exception, their lives were not very rich. I have thought about that throughout my career, for 40 years. I remain convinced that the solution the government wants to apply now, drawn from the American approach, is not a good one. Regardless of what my party decided, I would have voted against this solution.

I succeeded in my career as a criminal lawyer. I was the first criminal lawyer selected to be president of the bar in Quebec, the highest honour bestowed upon members of my profession. Afterward, I was a minister for nine and a half years, mainly public safety minister. I reorganized our police services and brought about reforms. I also started and finished the fight against major organized crime groups, including the most dangerous one, the Hell's Angels, by creating a new squad of officers from various police corps so they could work together and share information. We called it the Carcajou squad. In the spring of 2001, we were the only jurisdiction in the world to put an end to that very dangerous organization.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Serge Ménard: Please do not applaud for that. I do not deserve all of the credit, which must be shared by all of the people who worked on this. That squad was difficult to maintain, by the way.

I am for law and order, but I support finding the most efficient way to achieve it. I have compared European and American methods. The problem is interesting: most people think that crime is increasing, but it is actually decreasing. Anyone who checks Juristat will find that crime is decreasing.

People also think that judges are not being harsh enough. How can we determine whether judges are being harsh enough, Mr. Speaker? Look at how judges use incarceration. Yearly statistics on incarceration rates in different countries are available. Although Canada is not at the top of that list, it certainly ranks pretty high up.

• (1135)

Canada imprisons more people than Australia, than Italy, than Germany, than Austria, than France, than Sweden, than Finland, than Switzerland, than Denmark and than Norway. Those are countries we often compare ourselves to. But Canada imprisons far fewer people than the United States.

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In 2002, the last date for which statistics are available, Canada imprisoned 116 people per 100,000 population; the United States imprisoned 702 people per 100,000 population. The United States is where I most often hear some of the arguments that have been made. Get tough on criminals, that is the solution. The United States is tough, much tougher on criminals than us. And yet if you go to the United States, you run a three times higher risk of being killed than in Canada. And in the United States, you are at an eight times higher risk of being killed with a firearm than in Canada.

So is that solution working? Can we really say that our judges, who sentence more people to imprisonment than the other civilized countries we compare ourselves too, are not tough enough?

There is something else that makes our job extremely difficult, because I recognize that the position I am taking is not a popular position. But I believe that when we are in government, there are things that we know precisely because it is our job to know them, and we have access to documents. We thought about these things before gaining public office. When a majority of people are on the wrong track, we have a duty to try to get them back on the right track.

There is a reason why people believe that crime is going up: the less crime there is, the more attention is given to the crimes that are committed, to keep the percentage of news coverage devoted to crime up to more or less the same level as everywhere else. A murder in New York does not make the headlines, but a murder in Montreal or Toronto is still big news. Obviously, the papers talk about the most horrific crimes, because those are the ones that get people's attention the most. We are therefore told about the worst crimes and we still feel worried about crime. I realized this years ago, even before I entered politics: people think that crime is going up, when in fact it is going down.

As well, what sentences are being handed down? In this speech and in the ones that came before my own, I have not yet heard anyone talk about sentences that have been affirmed by the Court of Appeal. How many sentences may be handed down every day in a country like Canada? I would say that tens of thousands of sentences may be handed down every day in this country. Even with thousands, my goodness, in a system where there really are no simple rules, a system that is not mathematical, do we imagine that there will not sometimes be judges who make mistakes? What is the solution, then? Is it to require that all judges hand down minimum sentences, and tell them that they may not impose the real sentences that they ought to be imposing? Is the solution not, rather, to appeal to the Court of Appeal? Why not appeal all these sentences we have been told about, if they are that horrible?

There is a third reason why people have the wrong impression about crime. The media do not very often report the reasons that judges give to justify their sentences.

A few years ago, Anthony N. Doob, a researcher at York University in Toronto, did an interesting analysis of some 20 sentences handed down, of which there had been much talk in the media. He noticed that the judges generally gave 13 to 15 reasons to justify their sentences, and yet on average the papers reported only one and a quarter of them. So the public is aware of only one reason

and a quarter. Guess which reason is chosen? Always the most sensational one, the one that seems most inconsistent.

● (1140)

However, he used certain target groups and had them read the sentences given by the judges. Most of his research subjects were in agreement with the decisions handed down. When people are properly informed of the reasons of Canadian judges—and they are comparable to those in other civilized countries—when they hand down sentences, they are in agreement.

I have always been struck by one other thing as well. In France, when there are jurors, it is they who decide on the sentence after a finding of guilt. In Canada, only the judges decide on the sentences. In 2002, France had an incarceration rate of 85 persons per 100,000 population, while we had a rate of 116 persons per 100,000. Thus ordinary people, when they are familiar with the situation, are generally less harsh than under other systems.

In Canada, we have the most striking proof that minimum sentences have little effect on the commission of crime. Take the case of marijuana. In 1966, I had never heard of marijuana. I heard about when I started working as a crown attorney in Montreal. At the time, marijuana was growing in Quebec. Indian hemp is in fact mentioned in *La Flore laurentienne* by Brother Marie-Victorin. However, the marijuana growing in Quebec had no effect because it did not contain THC, the chemical that produces the desired effect. That has since changed. So all the marijuana that began entering the country at the time of flower power, peace and love, and Woodstock was imported from outside Canada. What was the minimum sentence for importing marijuana? It was seven years. Now that is quite a deterrent.

In Canada, we also have a positive example of other means of modifying criminal behaviour. I am referring to impaired driving. Here again, when I began as a young crown attorney, impaired driving was a veritable scourge, even though there were two possible minimum sentences. A first offence received 15 days in prison. A repeat offence brought three months in prison.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, we began to really tackle drinking and driving, and achieved results. I remember, when the roadblocks first started, the number of people in violation of the law were counted in percentage points. During roadblocks today, the number of people in violation are counted in fractions of percentage points. We therefore successfully educated the public very early and raised their awareness. I remember being surprised by my children. Although I had never suggested it, when my children went out with their friends, they would have a designated driver. No one ever thought of that kind of thing when I was their age.

Thus, we achieved positive results without making the laws any tougher. Even with iniquitous legislation—to such a degree that the Supreme Court later declared it unconstitutional—we were not able to stop marijuana from entering Canada.

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What must be understood is that criminals are not familiar with minimum sentences. Besides, do we even know what they are? If I were to ask how many minimum sentences are specified in the Criminal Code and what they are, I am convinced that even lawyers would make mistakes. The primary characteristic of criminals is that they are maladjusted. I have observed that they tend to be socially maladjusted. Are we to believe that criminals know what the minimum sentences are? Are we to believe that they think about how they will be sentenced if they commit a crime? The main reason they commit a crime is because they think they will not be caught. They are seeking immediate gain. They believe this because they are often under the influence when they commit crime. Some get carried away.

• (1145)

There is no real answer to crime, I said. Crime is as complex as psychology, and psychology is the branch of medicine that offers no simple answers, like other branches of medicine sometimes do. Doctors can remove a tumour or prescribe medication, for example. Nevertheless, dealing with crime depends in part on psychology.

The key is to have educated, responsible, knowledgeable, intelligent people pass an appropriate sentence in each case. Certainly the seriousness of the offence is an important factor, but it is not the only one. Other considerations such as the circumstances in which the offence was committed, the offender's age and how the group influences the offender or how the offender influences the group must be taken into account before a stricter sentence is handed down.

Crime is not on the rise. I see that I have about three minutes left, so I will talk about what particularly strikes me. I am surprised to see the Conservatives following the Americans' lead. Objective data indicate that the United States incarcerates six times as many individuals as Canada does, yet three times as many Americans are victims of homicide. How can anyone say that this system works?

In sharing these facts, I am not trying to show contempt for my colleagues, but to convince them. I believe that the Conservatives think as most people do. However, knowing these facts, we must bring them to the public's attention to justify individualized sentencing, trusting in our judges and appointing better judges if necessary. I will say that the Conservative agenda offers other proposals that I agree with wholeheartedly. For example, having a larger police force is a good idea, but it needs to be distributed better. The problem of street gangs is being addressed through the combined efforts of police officers doing community work in the field and investigators planning operations.

In addition, as the expression goes, they want to "send a message" to criminals. My heavens, they might as well send a message to extraterrestrials. I am very interested, of course, in the origins of the world and think it is amazing that we send messages into space. We send the series of prime numbers, that is to say, the numbers that cannot be divided by any other number. We suppose that if a civilization is developed, like ours, it should have discovered this mathematical truth, and we are listening for its answer. We stand as much chance, though, of receiving an answer during our lifetimes to the messages we send to extraterrestrials as we do that our message will get through to criminals.

Criminals do not read the legislation. They are not familiar with it. When they plan a crime, their only concern is not getting caught.

That is why preventive measures are so effective. We had a preventive measure that was working. This government wants to get rid of it. The Conservatives will thereby go down in history. People will study what happened in the past objectively, and the Conservatives will be thought to have made a bad choice.

Why are there three times as many homicides in the United States? Any intelligent person would say it is because there are too many guns. The gun registry is important. It should be said that the Conservatives are smart enough, actually, not to want to abolish it completely, even though that is in their program, by the way. We must acknowledge that the handgun registry has had beneficial effects in Canada since 1934. It is probably one of the factors behind the huge difference between the number of homicides committed in the United States and in Canada.

We have a system that has reduced the number of homicides committed with guns by 10%, and they are withdrawing it as a preventive measure. This system has succeeded in reducing the number of homicides committed with rifles or shotguns by 43% and the number of armed robberies by 48%. The reason why women have such different opinions from men on registering guns is probably that the number of women killed by guns has fallen by 31% in 10 years.

They are withdrawing a preventive measure that works in order to institute minimums that do not.

• (1150)

We may well end up some day with the same results as people in the United States have already obtained with these measures.

Mr. Brian Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first I would like to thank the member for his comments. I am a lawyer as well and I am proud of my profession. It is good to hear the opinions of lawyers in this House. In my view, this government has been battling the judiciary for some time.

For example, there was the attack against the chief justice and rejection by the government of the recommendation of the Judicial Salary and Benefits Commission. Now there are two bills against justices and their discretionary power.

I completely agree with the member's comments. However, he omitted one thing on which I would like to hear his opinion: the failure to provide resources to the community after adoption of these bills. We must recognize that a much greater burden will be placed on communities. This requires probation supervisors in prisons.

The budgets provide \$200 million for prisons, but only \$20 million for community resources. This is not enough. I would like to hear the member's views on this.

Mr. Serge Ménard: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague is quite right. This is an aspect that I did not broach, and he is right to remind me of it.

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I will add, to enlighten him fully, that the imprisonment of individuals costs a great deal. I think that he will agree. Much more effective monitoring systems could be established with the same money. As a result, we would not have the negative consequences that the prison atmosphere has on young people, who come out and themselves become criminals because of everything they learned inside. Because one day they come out.

Of course the comparison is ridiculous. We have to be wary of the comparison made by the hon. member between resources for incarceration and resources for outside monitoring. We should invest a lot more money, but it is more complicated to get the public to accept this, because it is more complex. It is more complex because the problem is complex.

I would add that people are always looking for models to the south of us, and forget to look around at home.

I would also note, since people seem to be saying that today's big problem is street gangs, that these young people in the street gangs are yesterday's juvenile delinquents from before the legislation was amended. The juvenile crime rate in Canada then was 50 times higher than in Quebec. Indeed the previous legislation gave Quebec an opportunity to adopt a philosophical principal that has shown its worth, the best measure, the right measure at the right time. One of my colleagues in the House has pointed this out on many occasions.

The rest of the country imposed on us and itself a purely objective system in order to punish young people as criminals, while we, in Quebec, tried to look at a young person at the scene of the crime and sought to find out how to stop him. A purely objective system was imposed on us.

I do not have the time, but I could tell you what some judges in Montreal told me about what the law forces them to do, even when they definitely feel that some intervention, even prison, might be justified despite the lack of violence in the offence. But they cannot send this young person to prison.

An objective system was imposed on us and we ended up with street gangs. Will we ask ourselves some questions at some point, and will we look elsewhere but the U.S. to find solutions to crime? At present, they imprison six times more people and they have three times more murders.

• (1155)

[*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, on the thought of reducing expenditures utilized currently for our penal system, I would like to make a statement in relation to how, in my home community, someone beat someone to death with a baseball bat and received a nine-month suspended sentence to be served in the community. Does he feel that is a correct usage of our justice system?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Ménard: Mr. Speaker, I would never give just one reason for a sentence. I have chided journalists for making that mistake.

I would like to know all of the reasons given and how the judge justified the sentence, which I find totally inappropriate. If this sentence has been appealed, I would like to have the reference so that I can read the appeal court's decision.

We in this House must not act as an appeal court by changing one, two or a thousand sentences and imposing certain decisions on judges for millions of cases to come.

Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague on his excellent presentation.

I would like to ask him a question. Statistics show that mandatory minimum sentencing for gun crimes does not necessarily make much of a difference. The member emphasized that sentences are much harsher in the United States than in Canada and Quebec. We also have fewer murders. Why are the Conservatives determined to move ahead with this bill despite all of the studies that have shown that such bills are irrelevant?

Mr. Serge Ménard: Mr. Speaker, I see it as a dogmatic position, inspired by solutions used in a country that does not have as good a record as we do. They invoke the same contradiction perpetrated by the Republicans in the southern United States: tough on crimes, liberal on arms. There you have the results for each side. I have given other explanations.

I recognize that my position is not a popular one. However, I believe that if we have the opportunity to calmly explain the facts to citizens, they will generally agree that the best solution is the individualization of each sentence by well-trained, enlightened, experienced professionals in the field.

[*English*]

Hon. Sue Barnes (London West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I know the member does his work thoroughly and very well, has he come across any American study which he felt was suitable to support the position of the bill as it is currently written? Does he or anyone he is aware of know of any Canadian research that would support the legislation?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Ménard: Mr. Speaker, I often review the statistics and have found a few. Statistics can be used to justify anything. However, there have been barely any American or Canadian studies. There are just a few. Some people are examining them closely.

Recently, I read the works of Anthony Doob—an expert from York University—that demolish their work methods and show that it has no influence at all. Once again, I would like to mention a major Canadian example: a minimum sentence of seven years for importing marijuana. Is that enough of a deterrent? Some say that this sentence is never handed out. That is not true. I have seen people behind bars for seven years. I have seen quite a few. At some point, it did not make any sense and this sentence was no longer applied.

That is where the perversion of the system begins. Certain speakers spoke of it this morning. Plea bargaining is beginning to be used. I am not a cynic. I practised a profession in which there is a great deal of cynicism. Sometimes, the political profession also makes us cynical. I have never been a cynic. When I leave politics, I can probably have another very lucrative career as a lawyer, as I have noted that bad ways line the pockets of good lawyers. This is a mistake that will make many attorneys rich.

• (1200)

[*English*]

Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak in the House today in favour of Bill C-10, mandatory minimum penalties for firearm offences.

I and most members of the House believe there is no greater responsibility elected politicians have, whether at the municipal, provincial or federal level, than to ensure the safety and protection of those they were elected to represent, which is why I am standing in full support of the bill.

By providing for escalating minimum penalties for serious use and non-use offences involving firearms, the government is keeping its commitment to making our communities safer. The bill sends a message of deterrence and, perhaps just as important, if it is passed it will help restore the public's confidence in the judicial system in Canada.

The bill targets the growing problem of gang violence and proliferation of restricted weapons that have terrorized law-abiding citizens. It deals with the most egregious Criminal Code offences committed with a firearm, including rape, robbery, murder, manslaughter, extortion and kidnapping. In other words, it leaves alone the farmers and the duck hunters and their lawful use of long guns and goes after the miscreants who are responsible for the rising tide of violence on our once peaceful urban streets.

The use of a restricted or prohibited firearm, such as a handgun, by these criminals would result in a mandatory five year sentence for the first offence, a seven year sentence if the accused has a prior conviction, and 10 years if the accused has more than one prior use conviction.

For possession of a loaded restricted or prohibited firearm, trafficking in firearms, possession of a firearm for the purpose of trafficking, making an automatic firearm, firearm smuggling and firearm theft, the mandatory minimum sentence would be three years for the first offence and five years for the second offence.

For possession of a firearm obtained by crime, possession contrary to a court order, break and enter to steal a firearm and use of an imitation firearm, the minimum mandatory sentence would be one year for the first offence, three years for a prior conviction and five years for more than one prior conviction.

In the last Parliament I introduced a private member's bill, Bill C-215, which called for tough new mandatory minimum sentencing. The bill received support from attorneys general in Ontario, Manitoba, and Nova Scotia and various police associations from across Canada, including the Canadian Professional Police Association and the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, which collectively cover almost every police officer in Canada in excess of

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70,000 members. They unanimously endorsed this approach to dealing with criminality.

During debate I had the opportunity to hear from many different experts in our criminal justice system and I can assure the House that there are many good examples of the efficacy of tough mandatory sentencing.

One example is the state of Florida's 10-20-life program that has helped reduce violent gun crime in that state by 30% and has produced the lowest violent crime rate in that region in a quarter of a century.

Another example before committee was project exile in the commonwealth of Virginia. Mandatory minimum sentencing there targeted at gun crimes has reduced gun violence in Richmond, Virginia by 40%.

Gang related homicides and the increasing use of restricted and prohibited firearms in the commission of major criminal offences has risen dramatically in recent years in Canada, as was well illustrated by the past summer of violence in many of our urban corridors, while such crimes in the U.S. have been in decline.

I would suggest to the House that the preoccupation with statistics does not do justice to this serious debate. As Mark Twain is known to have remarked, "There are three kinds of lies: lies, damn lies, and statistics".

• (1205)

We should not lose focus. These numbers are not just statistics. These numbers represent someone's son, daughter, father, mother or neighbour. Their deaths or injuries irrevocably change the lives of the loved ones they leave behind. The pain and suffering is not just for the victims. It extends beyond, into the families and into the communities. It has a disastrous effect on the psychology and the makeup of Canadian society.

As many of my colleagues know, I was a police officer many years ago. As a former police officer I saw firsthand the devastating impact violent crime can have on families. Whether someone's definition is that violent crime is on the decline or on the rise, I personally believe and sincerely hope that the majority of my colleagues in the House believe that no level of gun violence is acceptable.

I would maintain that the government has a responsibility and a duty to do more to ensure the safety and the security of its citizens. I have and I will continue to believe that there is no more important role that we can serve as members of Parliament than in the preservation of the health and safety of our citizens. We must go to whatever limit of the law or create the laws that are necessary for the ultimate protection of our people.

My own private member's bill on mandatory sentencing did receive support across party lines. It won the approval of the justice committee. I commend all my colleagues on that committee from all sides of the House for dealing with this issue in a non-partisan manner and putting justice before the parliamentary mechanisms and shenanigans that sometimes occur in the House. Unfortunately, the committee was dissolved with the calling of the election.

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However I am pleased that our government has recognized the spirit and the intent of that attempt to modify our justice system. It clearly lives on in the government's agenda in Bill C-10.

Bill C-10 proposes to introduce new and enhanced mandatory minimum penalties for firearms offences, along with legislation to eliminate conditional sentencing for violent offenders. It follows through on our election promise to introduce tougher minimum sentences for serious and repeat firearm offences.

The bill would make our streets safer by sending out a clear message. The message is that serious firearm crimes will be met with serious penitentiary time.

I encourage all my colleagues in the House to stand with me and with the government, put the interests of the Canadian public, the interests of the citizens in their ridings and the interests of every man, woman and child in this country, and support the legislation.

● (1210)

Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have been supportive of mandatory minimums as a way to penalize those individuals who have been proven to be a threat to society and who have continued to behave in a way that puts the lives of civilians at risk. When it comes to such situations where a small group of individuals are responsible for the bulk of serious crimes in our country, it is our job and the job of the justice department to ensure the penalties are there. We hope that the courts implement those penalties against those people.

In looking at the facts and the data, I found that when we were in government we introduced 42 mandatory minimum penalties. I will list a few of them. Ten listed offences, mandatory minimums: if a firearm is used in the commission of an offence, of criminal negligence causing death, manslaughter, attempted murder, assault causing bodily harm with intent to harm, sexual assault with a weapon, sexual assault, kidnapping, robbery and so on. We already have mandatory minimum sentences that we implemented over the last few years.

If we already have an array of mandatory minimums that apply to these offences, why is the government introducing the bill and putting more mandatory minimums when they are not necessary?

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has raised a solid, responsible, good question. The answer is very simple.

I commend the previous government for bringing in that effort to establish mandatory minimum penalties for firearms offences. The sad reality is it was an attempt, but it did not achieve the desired results.

We have to recognize there are different times. I sat on committee with many members of our enforcement branch. I sat with Tony Warr who is the head of the statistics for metropolitan Toronto. I met with Chief Blair and literally every Canadian police chief across Canada. They have said there is a new reality. In the past we did not have the major proliferation of gangs, guns and drugs. We had them in separation; they were there but they were not a major factor.

In this period in our history, sadly they have become a very serious threat to our communities and members of our society in general. There is an extraordinary coming together, a perfect storm,

if I might say that. Our police forces have recognized that this is a dynamic they have never faced before. They need the tools to deal with it. They have implored us to give them the assistance to put in a penalty that will act as a severe deterrent to those people. Many of those people quite frankly have a great deal of difficulty in having a moral or social conscience. Society has to be protected from a number of these people.

There are occasions when those people need to be in protective custody for the benefit and safety of our citizens. In our downtown urban cores the proliferation of guns, gangs and drugs is so strong and many citizens are afraid to testify. There are many occasions where violent criminals are running loose for the simple reason that people will not become involved in the process to try to apprehend them or bring them to justice. The criminals have taken over our streets.

We are in a time when more serious action is needed and desired. I am quite comfortable that the intent of the bill will deliver to our police forces and to our judicial system the tools they need to deal with this new reality.

● (1215)

Hon. Sue Barnes (London West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want it to be very clear for my hon. friend across the way that people in my party are concerned about doing the right thing and working with the police and with the communities. There is no ownership of being concerned about our communities. The reality is that everyone here wants to do the right thing.

I am telling the member quite frankly that if this bill were rational in its layout, if it had not been hurried, if it had been strategic and had done things that we could have supported, I would have given the bill my personal support. I would have encouraged others to do so as well.

There is one thing that I think is very flawed. I understand what the government is trying to do. There are some centres around the country that have increased gang and gun violence, but when a government puts forward a piece of legislation, that legislation has to fit Nunavut, Saskatchewan, eastern Canada and rural British Columbia just as easily. Ramifications are just as important. Through the aiding and abetting sections in the Criminal Code, the reality in this legislation is that there are different sanctions, different mandatory minimums for the restricted firearm and for the long gun.

For instance, for anyone who does not understand this and is not delving into the Criminal Code, which is most Canadians quite understandably, a first time offender could commit a robbery with a handgun and get more of a mandatory minimum than a repeat gun offender who committed the same type of robbery with a rifle or a shotgun, a long gun. The first time offender would get one year more. That is what this bill does.

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Could the member explain the justification behind that? People commit the same crime with different weapons and there are different results. The triggers are much more complex and important.

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Mr. Speaker, I would like to explain my perspective on this issue in addressing the hon. member's concern.

Everyone wants to use statistics for whatever purpose they serve best, but the overriding information we received at committee, literally every expert witness stated that the proportion of use of firearms in the restricted weapon category was well in excess of 90%. I do not have the exact figure in my memory bank, but the police were having an overwhelming amount of difficulties with respect to the criminal use of firearms which were all restricted weapons, the weapons for which we have had laws for 70 years, but criminals have no respect for that law.

Is this bill or any bill that comes before the House a perfect piece of legislation? I would love to think it would be, but times and things change, and as I mentioned, there are different circumstances. Right now the phenomenon of gang, guns and drugs has to be dealt with. The majority of those episodes involve restricted weapons, the ones that can be concealed and carried at whim. This has extended beyond the variety store robbery to carrying a weapon as a status symbol and going to a dance club where innocent people are out for a good time and are exposed to this type of activity.

We cannot allow society to head in that direction. Whether it happens in Nunavik, Halifax, Montreal or one of our urban cores, if a person bleeds, the person bleeds. If they are a victim, they are a victim. If they are a criminal, they are a criminal. We have to deal with the overriding problem which is the criminal use of restricted weapons. The intent of the bill is to deliberately target an area that is of deep concern. Should we go further? Should we do a little less? That is for the House to debate. Members on all sides of the House are free to bring forward suggestions and comments. In a perfect world we would not have criminals and we would not even need laws to address this, but unfortunately, it is an overriding concern right now and we have to deal with it.

In my riding 10 years ago there were hardly any firearms seized. The police chief in Belleville over 10 years seized two firearms and in the past year alone 54 restricted weapons were seized. This is not just a large urban core phenomenon.

• (1220)

Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to my hon. colleague's comments. I want to bring up something on Bill C-10 as there may be some confusion in terms of the intent of the bill. I gather that the intent of the bill is to address criminal activity by hard core criminals, particularly individuals who are involved in organized crime.

If we look at the statistics on criminal activity and crimes in Canada, we will find that 75% of crimes in Canada have actually been in decline. Looking at the most serious, homicide, which is an exception, that which probably all Canadians are most concerned about, in 2000 the homicide rate was 1.8 per 100,000 citizens and today it is about two. If we look at all other criminal activity, 75% of it, the rate for many violent crimes has actually declined over the last six years, and indeed, if we looked back in time, we would find there was a decline before that.

What is increasing, as the hon. member was correction in mentioning, is organized crime. This is a very serious problem in our country, as most police officers have told us, and requires a great deal of effort.

Going in that direction, we passed the RICO amendments, racketeering influence corruption organization charges. Some people think that organized crime gangs, by and large, are people who have long hair, patches on the backs of their jackets and drive big Harley-Davidson motorcycles. That is the conventional thinking and certainly some are like that, but the bulk of organized criminals are individuals in \$3,000 Armani suits who look like us and they use very sophisticated technology to commit crimes. They do this in many different ways.

One of the serious power generators of organized crime is drugs because they are prohibited. Whenever there is prohibition, a warped and twisted market is established where that which is prohibited has a value far beyond its actual worth. I would not for a moment advocate that anybody use drugs. I am opposed to it. I am a physician. In my professional career I have been involved in helping people get off drugs because of the damage that drugs inflict.

If we look at soft drugs, for example, marijuana, we have to ask ourselves whether the current prohibitions are beneficial to society. The answer that comes from groups as diverse as the Canadian Medical Association and churches is that the current prohibitions against simple possession of marijuana are actually more deleterious and damaging to the individual than if we were to decriminalize simple possession, which is what I personally hoped the government would pursue.

The Liberal government put forward a bill to decriminalize the simple possession of marijuana. In fact, if we decriminalized it and allowed individuals to possess three plants, which in effect are weeds, albeit weeds which, no question, if smoked cause damaging effects and it is habit forming, the ties between the individual small time user and organized criminal activity would be severed.

It is because of its prohibition that organized crime gangs derive moneys from marijuana in our country. Marijuana, and to a lesser extent cocaine and to a large extent crystal meth and other drugs drive the financial underpinnings of organized crime gangs. They buy and sell any kind of contraband, including guns. Thankfully, handguns are severely restricted in our country. They prey upon people and use contraband, from liquor to people to drugs, to make money. It affects our country and society in very negative ways.

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●(1225)

How do we manage go after individuals who may possess guns illegally? How do we affect those people in a negative way? The Liberals put forth a number of mandatory minimums and RICO. The government may want to consider strengthening the RICO amendments. It may want to consider strengthening the racketeer influenced and corruption organizations charges that enable police and courts to go after the financial underpinnings of organized crime gangs.

One of the worst things a government could do to organized crime would be to legalize the simple possession of marijuana and allow individuals to possess two to three plants per individual, and no more. That would separate the commercial grow operations, which should and must continue to be illegal, many of which are connected to organized crime, and the small time recreational user who has a couple of plants. Leave that as a problem to be dealt with medically. Leave it to individuals to discuss this with their physicians in an effort to try to decrease that. Put money into the schools to encourage children not to use drugs at all. That would be beneficial. Severing the small time user from the organized crime gangs involved in organized grow operations is fundamentally important.

We have to increase the penalties against those individuals and give the police the technology required go after them. I would encourage the government to listen to the police who have effective solutions to this problem. I encourage it to listen to the courts and lawyers. They can advise the government how to go after individuals involved in organized crime so they cannot use and twist our criminal justice system in a way that allows them to not have the force of the law apply to their nefarious activities.

This would be sensible and effective. My hon. colleague, who spoke before me, addressed mandatory minimums with respect to Bill C-10. This would address that issue.

The Liberal government put in quite a few mandatory minimums, which may not be well-known to the public. They addressed those individuals who were involved or had been involved in serious criminal activity. It is a relatively small group who are repeatedly involved in activities that are profoundly frustrating to the police.

I will refer to the comments of my colleague from London West who gave a very good summary of that. She said that the Criminal Code contained 42 mandatory minimum penalties, that sentencing judges could use their discretion when sentencing to up for higher than the mandatory minimums and that a mandatory minimum was a floor and not a ceiling.

Generally speaking, these 42 infractions fall within the following criteria: impaired driving and blood alcohol over .08; betting and bookmaking; high treason; second degree murder; use of a firearm in an indictable offence; use of a firearm in 10 listed offences; possession and trafficking of various prohibited firearms; sexual interference; invitation to sexual touching; sexual exploitation; making, transmitting, possessing, accessing child pornography, and we have some of the toughest laws in the world that we enacted against child pornography; procuring and committing sexual activities on minors; prostitution of minors; and living off the avails of child prostitution. We also introduced a number of measures to

toughen the laws against those individuals who sexually preyed on minors.

The 10 listed offences included mandatory minimums for: a firearm was used in commission with the offences; criminal negligence caused death; manslaughter; attempted murder; causing bodily harm with intent to harm; sexual assault with a weapon, a firearm; aggravated sexual assault; kidnapping; robbery; extortion and hostage taking.

Members can see the Liberal government introduced an array of mandatory minimums.

Why are these further mandatory minimums required if we already have applied an array of mandatory minimums to address serious indictable offences? I think most of us feel we should have sentencing guidelines for the courts so individuals cannot get off on serious offences?

●(1230)

I also want to address the issue of terrorism, which is connected. We had a serious event take place over the last few days in Toronto. Part of our ability to execute our duties and responsibilities to protect Canadians, which is one of our most serious duties of all, is our ability to deal with these issues.

Terrorism is a complex issue. I would implore the government to work with Muslim communities and ask them to be much more vigilant within their communities when they find individuals espousing fundamental violent sentiments against our society. This affects Muslims and non-Muslims alike. It offends the vast majority of Muslims, who are the backbone of Canadian society, when they hear that individuals of their faith have allegedly been engaged in these activities.

Around the world there are religious schools. Some of them teach a very anti-western sentiment, sometimes with significant, overt and explicit violent overtones. The Muslim communities in Canada must work with the authorities when they find that individuals are trying to get particularly young individuals involved in violent activities. That community, be it Muslim or non-Muslim, must address this and inform the authorities if it is taking place.

Those communities should be a monitoring mechanism. If they are vigilant within their communities and are willing to take the steps to monitor what is occurring, then we will have a level of intelligence and knowledge on the ground that is invaluable to the police. Muslims and non-Muslims alike will be killed in terrorist activities. We saw that with 9/11. We saw that in Bali. We saw that in Kenya, in Tanzania and in Spain. These are areas where al-Qaeda has engaged in terrorist activities.

I am sure all of us would implore Muslim communities to be more vigilant, to look within their communities and discourage individuals who espouse anti-western hatred or violent activities against our society. This is clearly not something any civic-minded individual would want to support. I know the Muslim communities do not support it.

Government Orders

There are bad eggs in any group. It is up to all of us to identify those bad eggs who are willing to engage in illegal and violent activities against our society. I cannot emphasize enough how important that is. This level of intelligence and knowledge on the ground would be invaluable to our police officers and CSIS in their ability to protect us.

The past weekend showed us that Canada is not immune from terrorist activities. We are a mark, that is very clear. We cannot be lulled into a sense of self-delusion by thinking we are not. It behooves us to be prepared, not paranoid, to engage in those necessary protective measures to ensure that life and limb are protected.

I want to deal with the issue of prevention. I have brought it up many times in the House. The government has an extraordinary opportunity, with the money it has right now, to work with the provinces to truly implement a preventive mechanism that works.

Current science has allowed us to look at the development of a child's brain in the first six years of life. If we use something called a positron emission tomography scanner, called a PET scanner. During that time, the brain is very sponge like. It is very malleable, like plastic, to use the technical term.

● (1235)

What happens at that early stage of life is the neurons making those connections take place during that period of time. Positive and negative things can affect those neuro connections. For children who are subjected to sexual abuse, improper nutrition, violence and neglect, we can prove that those neuro connections do not take place as effectively as they would in children who are in a loving, caring environments where they have engagement with good parents and have good nutrition. Doing that enables children to have the psychological and neurological bedrock that will enable them to be productive, integrated members of society.

The most egregious example of this is when a fetus is subjected to alcohol, which is devastating. We see the damage when the child is born. The reason I mention this is we know that up to 40% to 50% of individuals who are in jail have FAS or FAE. This is a staggering statistic, given that FAS and FAE are preventable causes of neurological damage at birth. We can do something about this.

Looking at statistics, some anti-poverty advocates say that poverty leads to criminal activity. If that were the case, then children of members of religious communities, or padres, or pastors or others who do not make much money would be running afoul of the law. However, the fact is they do very well.

Similarly in immigrant communities, where people come here with nothing, but provide their children with very solid parenting, those children do far better than their parents. They have a disciplined, structured environment with the care and the love they require.

If the government could work with the provinces for an awareness program on literacy and if children were read to or if they had playtime for 30 minutes a day, the impact upon those children would be extraordinary, and that has been proven to work.

These are simple things that work very well. We can extend that to physical activity. Silken Laumann, our Olympic heroine, is advocating playtime with children, not sitting in front of a television. These days there is far too much structure in children's lives. They do not have a chance to play, which is critically important in the development of that child's brain. It provides a level of malleability that stands them in good stead later on.

Simple things can go a long way. The impact upon this, through a wide range of socio-economic parameters, is quite significant, including kids who stay in school longer, less dependence on welfare and higher rates of post-secondary education. Also, there is a 50% to 60% reduction in youth crime. Imagine having a program that is very simple, inexpensive and is child-parent centred, which that results in a 50% to 60% reduction in youth crime. It is a staggering statistic and it works.

A 25 year retrospective analysis has been done in places as far afield as Yipsilanty, Michigan and Moncton, New Brunswick, where our former colleague, Claudette Bradshaw, and her husband started a wonderful head start program. Hawaii's has healthy start program. Also wonderful work is being done at the University of Montreal.

The statistics, the facts and the simple measures are there. While it does not fall under the realm of the federal government, it behooves the federal government to work with its provincial counterparts to accomplish this.

The government, with the money it has, has great opportunities. When we were in government, we introduced 42 mandatory minimum sentences for an array of very serious offences. It is our view that this bill is not necessary. If it were necessary, we would be ardent supporters of it. However, we have already implemented an array of mandatory minimums and sentencing guideline positions for the courts.

It would be better for the government to focus on implementing solutions that would help the police to go after organized criminal activity, which is a serious problem in our society. Those solutions have been given to the government by the police. I would implore and challenge the government to implement those solutions, *carpe diem*.

● (1240)

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, like many Liberals, stood in his place and talked about the many things the Liberals did when they were in office with respect to mandatory minimums.

I find that rather strange. I remember that when we were over on that side of the House, we stood in our places and asked the Liberal justice minister to implement mandatory penalties. He said they would not work, that they would not work anywhere, and that he was not going to do it.

Government Orders

Since that time, of course, we know that members of Parliament on all sides have stood up and talked about tragedies that have happened all across the country. The one that sticks out in my mind is the young lady who was shopping with her parents on Boxing Day in downtown Toronto and was killed by a stray bullet fired by a street gang. She got killed. So my response for the member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca is that whatever he and his party over there have done has not worked. Street gangs are proliferating in all of the cities across this country, whether it be Montreal, Toronto or Vancouver. It is a tragedy.

They talk about crime prevention and the poor darlings who have had an unfortunate background, and that is true. We do need to spend some time with respect to these young people, generally young men, who have had bad backgrounds, but what about the victims? What about members of the public?

Does my colleague think that in the past we have spent too much time and placed too much emphasis on crime prevention when we should be thinking about members of the public, the people who are suffering from these street gangs and violent crimes?

Hon. Keith Martin: Mr. Speaker, it is not an either/or proposition. Both can be done. We have done both. It is not about prevention or getting tough on those individuals who have abused their position in society. We do both.

Let me address the member's question, because he is confusing a number of things. This issue is about mandatory minimum sentences with respect to gun violence. The gentleman brought up the tragic situation where the young girl was murdered in Toronto. Mandatory minimum sentences were in existence at that time. We already have mandatory minimums for indictable offences, including murder, attempted murder, manslaughter and assault causing bodily harm.

If these sentences already existed, why did they not prevent the murder of that young girl? Because they would not have. It is more complex than that. The mandatory minimums that the member refers to with respect to the charges that would be laid against these individuals already exist. They are already there.

The question is, what do we do about gang violence? There are a lot of things that can be done, including, as I mentioned, addressing the underpinnings of the violence, addressing the drug issue around gangs, taking the financial legs out from underneath organized crime gangs, having better monitoring, and giving the police better tools to go after these individuals.

Also, what we did was to put tougher penalties in place for the illegal importation of guns. What we know about most of the people who use guns as part of organized criminal activity is that these are not individuals who take a course, get an FAC, wait six months, get a background check, buy a gun and then take part in organized criminal activity. These are not the individuals who do that. We already have laws that apply to these individuals.

The member needs to focus on the issue at hand. We are submitting that laws for mandatory minimums already exist, but we have suggested other things that the government should be doing to address the issue of organized criminal activity and gang violence.

● (1245)

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): The hon. member for Ahuntsic.

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Mr. Speaker, is the debate resumed? I lost track.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): We are currently hearing questions and comments.

[*English*]

The hon. member for Mississauga South.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments provided by the speaker. In addition to the 42 mandatory minimums that already exist in the Criminal Code, there is the principle of aiding and abetting, which means that those who have knowledge will also be subject to the same kinds of penalties because of their involvement before, during or after. This net goes quite a bit further.

I want to quote from yesterday's speech by the Liberal Party justice critic in which she stated:

A 2005 survey of judges compiled by the Department of Justice found that slightly over half felt that mandatory minimum sentences hindered their ability to impose a just sentence.

It appears that the question here is a matter of whether or not the judicial principle of proportionality of penalty is being impinged by the existence or by the spread of mandatory minimums. Is the member is aware of this concern within the judicial system? It is not unanimous by any means but is certainly a point of concern.

Hon. Keith Martin: Mr. Speaker, I have heard that concern and have read about it, but I think that at the end of the day what we should be doing is certainly listening to the police officers, as my colleague has done in doing a tremendous amount of work with police forces throughout the country.

We should listen to what the police officers and the police associations are saying. We should utilize their technical skills and their solutions, which come from the ground, and employ those solutions. This is what we tried to do when we were in government. That is why the previous government put out 42 mandatory minimums for an array of serious offences in the country.

We have implemented those solutions for the benefit of Canadians, but I would also suggest that the government take a look at the other solutions we have been offering in terms of organized criminal gangs.

Hon. Carol Skelton (Minister of National Revenue and Minister of Western Economic Diversification, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour and a pleasure to rise today on behalf of my constituents of Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar.

In this past election I was elected for a third time, which was very humbling. We all come here to represent thousands of our neighbours. It really means a great deal when they ask us to do it not once, not twice, but for a third time. I would really like to thank my entire campaign team for their tireless work. I would especially like to thank my husband, Noel, and the rest of my family for their encouragement and their support.

Government Orders

I rise today because of my family: my police officer son-in-law, my daughters, my granddaughters, my sons, my husband and my mother. I also have the same concerns as my neighbours when it comes to safety and security. Unfortunately, the justice system under the Liberals only allowed problems to grow and ignored the solutions.

Today I am proud to be part of a government that is willing to take a tough stand against violent criminals, a government that places the priority on law-abiding citizens and their protection.

The Minister of Justice has worked extremely hard to bring this government priority forward as legislation in such a short time. The minister must be commended for his tireless efforts in this regard.

This legislation is one of our five priorities. As the Prime Minister has stated on many occasions, this Conservative government will have a clear focus and clear priorities.

Aside from reducing the GST, providing parents with a choice in child care, bringing accountability to government, and providing health care guarantees, we promised to strengthen criminal sentencing. We are delivering on this promise.

This bill that calls for mandatory minimum penalties is one of the three important pieces of crime legislation. The other two are just as important, especially the bill to raise the age of sexual consent to 16 years of age.

Bill C-10 would amend the Criminal Code to increase minimum penalties for serious offences involving firearms. Other members have already talked about how the bill specifically targets street gang members or drug traffickers who use illegal firearms, including prohibited and restricted firearms, to conduct their business. That kind of activity often involves organized crime offences.

The Criminal Code provides that any indictable offence committed for the benefit of, or at the direction of, or in association with a criminal organization constitutes a criminal organization offence. It appears that many of the recent shootings in streets, buses, parking lots and other public areas in Toronto were committed as part of attempts to bring down rival gang members.

Often these actions have as their innocent victims bystanders who have no part of the dispute. All crime with guns is troubling, but the toll on our society among innocent bystanders and those who see these crimes occur is absolutely unacceptable. This kind of criminality has also manifested itself in Quebec due to the presence of certain well known motorcycle gangs.

In its 2003 "Annual Report on Organized Crime in Canada", Criminal Intelligence Service Canada noted that targeted measures taken by law enforcement agencies have had a direct impact on some of the traditional organized crime groups in Quebec and other parts of Canada.

On the subject of firearms and organized crime, the report also stated that all organized crime groups are involved in illicit firearm activities in some manner and individual gang members often possess numerous firearms.

CSIS reports that in the country's urban centres, criminal gangs possess illicit firearms, particularly handguns, which they use for

intimidation and acts of violence. These criminal organizations use handguns and restricted firearms as the tools of their trade. They are the tools by which these gangs profit from trade in narcotics and other illicit items, and there is a thriving business in buying and selling these illegal weapons themselves.

• (1250)

The bill aims to attack those who are members of these organizations and who engage in the traffic of guns and drugs.

We have to get tough on firearms offences committed by street gangs and criminal organizations. The phenomenon of armed street gangs is a growing concern in Canada. It is not just the large urban centres like Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver that are suffering.

Organized crime is everywhere in Canada since it has direct control over the market for illegal drugs. It has reached an impact that is felt all across Canada. As their reach expands these organizations bring the tools of their trade with them and the blight of handgun crime continues to expand.

Furthermore, firearms smuggled from the United States or stolen within Canada remain the primary source for illicit firearms. A vast amount of Canadian territory borders the United States. The availability of firearms in the United States is a major problem. The firearms are often purchased by legitimate buyers or straw purchasers who then sell them over to others who smuggle them across the border. That black market is one of the businesses of criminal organizations. We must fight back with everything we have at our disposal through targeted law enforcement measures of course, but also through the kind of legislation measures proposed in Bill C-10.

I strongly support the measures proposed in this bill. Once the people involved in these types of crimes have been brought before our courts by our police and law enforcement agencies, they will face stiffer penalties. These penalties will deter people from crimes with firearms and ensure that people who commit serious crimes involving firearms will be sentenced to longer terms of imprisonment. This is the only way that we are going to win our ongoing fight against organized crime.

This legislation has the full support of my constituents. Recently, I sent out a survey and the results were clear: 95% of the respondents felt that mandatory minimum sentences would improve public safety and 86% indicated that they were concerned about safety in their neighbourhood and community. When 86% of my constituents in Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar are concerned about their safety and their own neighbourhood, that tells me we have a major problem.

I have listened to my constituents. I read the responses of every single survey that comes in and would like to share some of their comments with the House.

Government Orders

Hugh in Rosetown says, “I agree with mandatory sentences for drug dealing, growing or trafficking and mandatory sentences for any offence involving a gun or a knife”. Hugh lives in Rosetown, a rural Saskatchewan town, and yet he knows the dangers and lives with the same concerns as those in downtown areas of our major cities.

Clearly, Hugh has seen that we need to be tougher on violent criminals, especially those who use a weapon. In fact, this legislation calls for tougher mandatory minimum penalties for the following serious Criminal Code offences involving the use of a firearm: attempted murder, discharging a firearm with intent, sexual and aggravated sexual assault, kidnapping, hostage taking, robbery and extortion.

If a restricted or prohibited firearm, such as a handgun, is used in the commission of these offences or if the offence is committed in connection with a gang, the mandatory minimum sentences would be 5 years on the first offence, 7 years if the accused has one prior use conviction or 10 years if the accused has more than one prior use conviction.

Based on his comments, I know Brent, from my own hometown of Harris which has a population of about 250 people, that is if everyone is at home, could not agree more with these proposed changes.

He says, “I feel sentencing should be strong and made as a deterrent to all ages. Many seem to feel that because they're young they'll go easy on them or that they have had a difficult upbringing. By the age of eight you know the difference between right and wrong. People need to know there are consequences to their actions”.

Consequences are important and many feel that in the absence of serious consequences many criminals and would-be criminals develop a cavalier attitude when it comes to obeying the law. The government will ensure that there is a new respect for the law and reward those law-abiding citizens by dealing more seriously with the criminals.

When I read the comments sent in by Bud in Saskatoon, I honestly feel he echoes many of the comments I heard going door to door in the election campaign asking people what they wanted from a new Conservative government.

● (1255)

Bud said, “Crime crackdown, more serious sentencing for all criminals, no bail for serious crimes, no exceptions”. He could not be more clear in what he wanted and I am proud to say we are delivering for Bud, his neighbours and all of Saskatoon.

I know there are a lot more things Canadians want to see done with the justice system. When Carol R. of Saskatoon wrote to me, she raised another set of criminal justice issues that I have spoken about in the past. Carol said, “Our justice system needs to be revamped. People who commit horrible crimes seem to get away with it. Something needs to be done on the young offenders Act. Stricter sentences for those involved in pornography and child abuse”.

While we cannot solve every problem in one day or one piece of legislation, Carol can be assured that we also want to continue with our improvements to the justice system in Canada. Along with these proposed reforms dealing with mandatory minimum penalties, the government is introducing legislation that will prohibit the use of conditional sentences for serious and violent crimes.

These reforms will help keep our streets and communities safer by ending the use of conditional sentences, including house arrest for serious offences. The reforms will help ensure a cautious and more appropriate use of conditional sentences, reserving them for less serious offences that pose a low risk for community safety.

This legislation will help improve public confidence in the use of conditional sentences by helping to ensure criminals face penalties that match the seriousness of their crimes. I honestly believe that any member of Parliament who has gone door to door in his or her riding will have heard the same message as I did. It was astounding to hear the same issues come up in both the rural and urban areas of my riding.

Community safety is clearly a shared concern right across Canada. I have heard the message. I hope my colleagues opposite have heard the same and I look forward to seeing them rise to give their support to these important and long overdue changes.

I would like to thank my constituents for granting me the privilege of representing them once again in the House of Commons. I will be home soon and look forward to seeing them all again.

● (1300)

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think you will find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practices of the House, the debate at second reading on Bill C-10 be now deemed adjourned and the House consider a motion in the name of the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, “That notwithstanding the adoption at third reading of C-13, an act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on May 2, 2006, this House take note of Bill C-13”, and that, during such debate, no member shall speak for more than 20 minutes and that following each speech a period not exceeding ten minutes shall be made available, if required, to allow members to ask questions and comment briefly on matters relevant to the speech and to allow responses thereto; and that members may indicate to the Speaker that he or she will be dividing his or her time with any other member; and that the motion be deemed withdrawn at the conclusion of government orders today.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): The hon. member for Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour on a point of order.

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, BQ): Mr. Speaker, since the Bloc Québécois was not involved in the discussions that took place earlier, does that mean, according to this motion, that there will be no vote at the end of private members' business and no adoption on division?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): Yes. The Leader of the Government in the House.

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[English]

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order, this has the effect of a take note debate on the subject of the budget implementation bill. That motion will be deemed to have been withdrawn at the end of government orders.

The hon. member will be aware that there are I believe three votes not related to this or to Bill C-10 or Bill C-13 scheduled for later on today.

This motion will be withdrawn at the end of the day. I believe if the hon. member checks with the House leader for the Bloc Québécois and the whip, this is their understanding and their agreement as well.

• (1305)

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): Does the Leader of the Government in the House have the consent of the House to present the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): 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)

* * *

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2006

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC) moved:

That, notwithstanding the adoption at the third reading of Bill C-13, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on May 2, 2006, this House examine Bill C-13.

[English]

Ms. Diane Ablonczy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to go over for Canadians some of the measures in the government's first budget which was passed earlier today but on which we will add some thoughts in this take note debate.

Before I outline the measures contained in the bill, I would like to mention that in preparing our first budget, the new government heard from literally hundreds of Canadians. In spite of a fairly short timeframe, this was an exercise in which we opened the whole budget decision making process to input from Canadians from all walks of life and in communities large and small across Canada.

Part of this was our very first online prebudget consultations. I commend the Minister of Finance for this new initiative which allowed Canadians to very quickly put in their thoughts and their recommendations about the budget.

The first thing Canadians told us in the election and in the consultations following the election was that they were not getting ahead because of the tax bites from their incomes. Canadians said

that they work hard and that they do what they can to maximize their household incomes but that the tax bites taken out of their incomes and put into the government coffers were too much.

We listened to Canadians and we did not believe middle class Canadians and their families, who work hard but receive less and less in return, were being treated fairly in our tax system. We also knew, from the election and from Canadians across the country, that they wanted a change in the level of taxes they were paying. We believe Canadians should not be kept waiting for tax relief.

We also heard that Canadians did not want to be kept waiting for government to be cleaned up and made more accountable and transparent. We heard that Canadians wanted real and lasting tax relief and support for real choice in child care. We also heard that Canadians did not want to wait any longer for health care delivery times to be improved.

Our new government promised that we would take action on these priorities and we have kept our word in this budget. In some cases the budget delivered more than promised. We are taking action and will continue to keep the promises we made to Canadians. The measures contained in the budget bill, Bill C-13, which was passed in the House today, do reflect those promises to Canadians and they reflect the priorities of Canadians.

I would like to share with hon. members some of the proposals in the bill that illustrate how the government is keeping its promises to Canadians.

The first issue was the reduction of taxes. In this budget we moved very strongly toward reducing taxes for individuals. Our tax relief in this budget is more than in the last four budgets combined. I would like to outline some of the tax reduction measures.

The bill reduces the GST by 1%, which was an election commitment by this government and one on which we followed through. Starting on Canada Day, the GST will be lowered by one percentage point. This measure will benefit Canadians in a tangible way. Every time they buy something for themselves, their families or their homes they will see the results in the bottom line. This is money in Canadians' pockets and it is money that can be used by Canadians for other family priorities.

The savings from this GST reduction of 1% will amount to approximately \$3.5 billion in this fiscal year, 2006-07, and even more in the following year with \$5.2 billion. This government went beyond this measure in giving tax relief because to provide further tax relief to low and modest income Canadians we will maintain the GST credit at current levels, even though the GST rate will be reduced. That will protect some of the money that low and modest income Canadians were counting on from the GST credit.

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•(1310)

We will retain the existing GST-HST rebate rates for new housing and purchases made by public sector bodies. This will ensure that these entities will continue to benefit from the same level of GST relief as was available before.

Although the GST cap is an important step in the right direction, we have a whole package of tax relief for Canadians, one being a reduction in personal income tax rates. We permanently lowered the basic personal income tax amount for Canadians. As part of this, we increased the basic personal amount, the amount that an individual can earn tax free, so it grows every year and remains above currently legislated levels for 2005, 2006 and 2007. This includes preserving the \$500 increase scheduled for 2005. The basic personal amount will continue to grow with indexation, in addition to a permanent \$100 increase in 2007.

Canada Day will be a good celebration in many ways. As of July 1, the bill permanently reduces the lowest personal income tax rate to 15.5%. This rate applies on about the first \$36,400 of Canadian income.

These measures will provide personal income tax relief of almost \$2.8 billion in this year and \$1.9 billion in the following year. The total tax relief for individuals is valued at almost \$20 billion over the next two years, money that will go back into the hands of Canadians. About 655,000 Canadians will be removed from the tax rolls entirely. Our tax plan will leave substantially more money in the pockets of Canadians than the previous government's proposals.

My friend across the way, who will be speaking shortly to this issue, makes much of the fact that the Liberals proposed and, indeed, put into action a reduction in personal income tax even though legislation was never passed. However, Canadians know that our package, taken altogether with the GST reduction and some of the other measures surrounding it, with the increase in the basic personal exemption, with the permanent legislated reduction in the personal tax rate and with the employment tax rate, far exceed the tax relief promised by the Liberals but never passed into law.

The Liberals talk about their promises but they need to explain themselves. If they were so committed to their promised taxation rates, why did they not pass them into law and make them permanent? Why did they wait until the 11th hour, to the electoral deathbed, so to speak, to promise this to Canadians and then have the nerve to say that their tax package, which they did not have enough of a commitment to pass into law, should replace the tax package we have in this budget that was passed in the House? Canadians know that our package taken altogether exceeds the Liberal promises.

Businesses are the job creators of our economy. Not only do they create jobs but they create wealth and that wealth creates taxation. We wanted to ensure that our businesses, our job creators, remained competitive. We did not want them to have a ball and chain of heavy taxes around their ankles when they were competing in the global marketplace so we provided tax relief to both large and small businesses.

•(1315)

The same tax relief was promised by the previous government, and although it was in office nearly 13 years, promises were all

Canadians received. The previous government's promises were never legislated and made permanent. We made them permanent. The budget, which was just passed, reduces the general corporate from 21% to 19% effective January 1, 2010. The federal capital tax, which will end as of January 1, 2006, is two years ahead of schedule. The corporate surtax for all corporations will also be eliminated as of January 1, 2008.

These and other tax measures will really help our small businesses which create about 50% of the jobs in this country. It is very important that we give them the freedom to soar without weighing them down with unnecessarily heavy taxes.

We have taken measures to treat businesses equitably and repealed the excise tax on jewellery, which was effective May 2, 2006, the date of the budget announcement. The announcement was just in time for Mother's Day. I hope a number of my colleagues in the House took advantage of that to celebrate Mother's Day with gifts of jewellery to their partner.

We want our businesses to compete with the best the world has to offer which is why we took these measures in the budget.

The budget contains measures to benefit our charitable organizations which play an important role in assisting Canadians and in contributing to our sense of community. A far away government having a one size fits all program is not nearly as effective as community based charitable organizations that personally and individually become involved with those in need. The budget bill exempts donations of publicly listed securities that go to public charities. These will be exempted from capital gains tax. This will give our charities a powerful set of tools for raising the funds they need to meet the needs of Canadians.

Because there is a great deal of interest now, thankfully, in environmental matters and in the ecology, we will be encouraging Canadians to make gifts of ecologically sensitive land, eco-gifts they are called. We will exempt those from capital gains tax, also effective on budget day, May 2.

Much has been said about child care in our budget. There is a difference of philosophy. Some people want a one size fits all government run program of day care for our kids. Many Canadians choose other forms of care for their children. They care for their children themselves at home. Relatives or friends provide child care depending on the work schedule of parents. Therefore, we believe that government should support all the child care choices of Canadians and not just one method of child care.

With the consent and support of Canadians in the election, we have provided support to all parents of preschool children, no matter what their child care choices are, because we know that no two families are alike. We do not believe that government is in the best position to make the right choices for our kids. It is the parents who are in that position.

Government Orders

We have introduced in this bill the universal child care benefit providing all families with \$100 per month per child under the age of six to help support their child care choices, whatever those might be for a particular family. This will come into effect on Canada Day when the bill, as we are hoping, receives royal assent, which we know Canadians with young children are looking forward to. The universal child care benefit will provide almost \$4 billion in funding over two years to about 1.5 million Canadian families with preschool children. I would add that this benefit does not affect the federal income tested programs, nor does it reduce the amount that can be claimed under the child care expense deduction.

● (1320)

Because choice in child care for families has created demand for day care, we are allocating \$250 million per year to create real child care spaces as part of our child care plan. We want to support the needs of all families and make sure that their choices are meaningful.

Also, so that they will not be left out, we have a number of measures in the budget to assist families who are facing special challenges. Groups with special needs are not forgotten in the budget. We are increasing the child disability benefit for children with disabilities and we are making it available to more families.

We also point out that these measures go beyond the recommendations of the technical advisory committee on tax measures for persons with disabilities. We carried out those recommendations and we went even further. We are extending the eligibility for the child disability benefit to middle and higher income families caring for a child who is eligible for the disability tax credit. Virtually all families that are currently eligible for the Canada child tax base benefit will also be able to access the disability tax credit. We have gone that extra step to help improve the lives of Canadians.

In summary, from the proposals that I have outlined here today and many others one can see that it is a far-reaching budget in many ways. There are many other sectors that have been assisted and many other issues that have been addressed in the budget. I do not have time to mention every single one of them, but we want to emphasize that our government is committed to practical and forward thinking investments that are part of making Canadians' lives better.

This budget is a foundation. It is our first budget and it is a foundation for budgets to come. I know our friends in the other parties in the House and indeed Canadians across the country will have a lot of advice to give the finance minister and the government as we work to produce our next budget in a few months' time. We welcome that debate. No one has all the answers. We know that other concerns need to be thoroughly debated. We are glad that takes place in this House and in other forums. We all want a good foundation for Canadian society and budgets are a part of that.

In just a few short months we have honoured Canadians' choice for a new approach to government, one which pledged to be more accountable and that would treat the tax dollars of Canadians with great respect and make sure that they actually deliver value for Canadians. We make it clear in the budget that we have kept our word on many of those promises. Many more are being worked on today and will be delivered in a very short time.

We are delivering substantial tax relief that is going to be permanent, legislated and right up front. We are not waiting until we have been in office for a decade to finally promise something. We mean business and we are putting it into legislation now. We are leaving more tax dollars where they belong and that is in the pockets of Canadians. We are investing in families and communities, education, security and infrastructure. We are doing it by being fiscally responsible and focusing on results and value for money.

The budget charts a new course for a stronger and more prosperous and more secure Canada. We thank members of the House for their support for the budget bill. We look forward to it passing into law after the Senate looks at it and it receives royal assent. This is a good day. Canadians are very pleased with the budget. We know they will be equally pleased as we go forward.

● (1325)

Hon. Brenda Chamberlain (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her thoughts. Obviously this side of the House has a lot of different feelings.

We know that the government was handed a very good set of financial books. We all agree on that. In fact, some of the statements in the member's opening address indicated that the Liberals had set a very healthy fiscal outlook for Canada. This is really good for the country. It also allows the current government to do some things.

One of the things I am quite concerned about and have been for some time is health care. I worry about the wait times, as I know the hon. member does. There is another area where there has been very little said. I have just come from the health committee. I want to ask the member a specific question because this does affect the budget. The Conservatives promised in November that if they were elected, they would enact a mental health commission. The minister just left the health committee. He did not give a commitment to move on that commission. It was a promise. I am wondering if the member knows if her party is going to move on that commission.

In Guelph we have the Homewood Health Centre. It is an esteemed health centre across Canada. It deals with mental health. There are not enough beds to accommodate the youth. There are many parents who need help for their youth. Some of the youth are suicidal. Some do not know where to go and there is no help.

I would be interested in the member's comments on this issue and what is specifically in the budget for mental health issues. It is a very important component. It is important to many Canadians who suffer from this serious disease.

Ms. Diane Ablonczy: Mr. Speaker, this is a serious issue and of course a heavy burden for some of our families. I know the member was very interested in what the committee had to say.

Government Orders

The government works with the provinces on these kinds of issues. The provinces deliver health care. I commend her government for the investment it made in health care of \$41 billion over I think it was 11 years, with an escalator clause every year to make sure that those amounts flowing into health care continued to grow.

I assure the member that this government has not forgotten the issue of mental health and those families that struggle with it. This is very much on our agenda.

Ms. Denise Savoie (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her comments and her openness to other solutions to various problems that Canadians face.

Last week I had the privilege to be part of the Canadian delegation to the G-8 meetings on post-secondary education. The ministers in attendance, including the minister from her government, recognized the importance of the preschool years in setting the stage for future learning, particularly literacy skills and that policies that promote optimal early learning and childhood development can make a substantial contribution to lifelong learning.

As we all know, there is a difference between day care and early childhood learning. I am wondering how the member squares what her government has done with child care with what her government has agreed to at the G-8 meeting?

Ms. Diane Ablonczy: Mr. Speaker, I think we are all agreed in the House that we want our kids to have a really good start. Where we might disagree is who gives the children that start. We believe that parents should make that decision.

Many parents choose and are able to spend more time providing those skills to their children. For example, I could read before I went to school, as I am sure could many members in the House, even though day care was not thought of at that time. Other parents choose to have good care and training in a setting that allows them to continue in the workplace.

Each parent makes those choices for their children. As I said before, that is what the government wants to support. Whether the parents choose to provide that kind of training themselves or through family members, friends, community organizations or through child care centres, we want to make sure that all those choices are viable, that they are real choices and that they are supported by the government and by the community at large.

There is no one size fits all. Families are different. We recognize and celebrate that, and we support that.

• (1330)

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, indeed, it is a wonderful day that the House would have passed the budget unanimously. I am very supportive of the bill. While the member indicated that no one has all the answers, the bill must have come very close to having all the answers, not seeing any opposition to the bill.

It has \$20 billion in tax breaks, more than the last four Liberal budgets. It has \$1,200 for child care for children under six. It funds 1,000 RCMP officer positions. It is a wonderful bill.

I am wondering if the member has any insight, given the initial opposition of the Liberals and the New Democrats to the bill, why

today they would have passed it unanimously? I was here in the House. I heard the Speaker mention it a number of times. There was no opposition. The bill passed unanimously. I am wondering whether the member has any insight into what would have made the Liberals and the NDP change their minds. What specific aspect of the bill was it?

Ms. Diane Ablonczy: Mr. Speaker, I have never wanted to venture into the minds of some of my hon. colleagues in opposition.

I would say that we are pleased that the budget has passed the House today and has gone to the Senate. More than that, this is a good day for Canadians as well. We know that even though not everybody agrees with every single thing in the budget, overall it meets the commitments the government made to Canadians and it provides substantial and real assistance in a whole number of areas.

For all parties, whether they would like to have seen some different permutations and combinations in the way the budget was put together, we all join together in being glad for the sake of Canadians that so many of these measures are now well on the way and the benefits flowing to Canadians and their families.

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Guelph.

I think there are four reasons why this is a bad budget. It is a dishonest budget. It is a visionless budget. It is a fiscally irresponsible budget and it is a meanspirited budget cunningly crafted to appeal to the Conservative base. Let me go through each of those four points.

The parliamentary secretary referred to Liberal vague plans to cut income tax. These were not vague plans. They were on the actual income tax forms that each and every Canadian filled out in the past year. In discussions with department officials and even with the Minister of Finance in front of the committee, all have acknowledged that the income tax that Canadians actually paid at the lowest rate is going up. It is not going down.

It is true that the legislated rate is coming down, but it is also true that Canadians outside of Ottawa do not care whether it is a legislated rate or a rate passed by a ways and means motion. What they care about is the rate they actually pay. Everybody agrees that this rate has gone up as a consequence of the budget and not down.

As economist Dale Orr pointed out, there are certain consequences or corollaries following from that. First, a large number of Canadians have seen a reduction in their take home pay. That simply flows from the fact that the income tax rate at the lowest level has gone up. Second, the basic personal amount has gone down, not up, as a consequence of which 200,000 Canadians have been added to the tax rolls as a consequence of this budget. Third and finally, when we make the correction between up and down, we find that the actual income tax relief provided by the budget is only 5% of what the budget claims.

Government Orders

These are huge errors in presenting the budget, which entirely mislead Canadians. It is extremely important that the record be corrected. Indeed, Canadians will discover this when they see their paycheques in July or whenever the budget comes into effect. They will make the unpleasant discovery that in many cases they are actually paying more income tax, rather than less.

The budget is dishonest in a number of other ways. Finance officials confirmed that as a consequence of the budget the government saves approximately \$5 billion in terms of aboriginals. That is to say, the amount which the Liberals had committed to Kelowna is not committed any more. That is a factual numerical way to say that Kelowna is indeed truly dead as a consequence of the budget and the government.

The budget is dishonest in a very fundamental way. It is also visionless. I believe that the fundamental question facing any finance minister of Canada in the year 2006 is this. How will this country of some 30 million people continue to thrive and prosper in a world of waking Goliaths like China, India, and traditional Goliaths like Europe and the United States? How will this country compete, thrive and prosper?

The budget says absolutely nothing on this subject, which has to be central to any responsible budget, especially that of a new government. I think there are two general overall ingredients in order to answer this question. One is competitive taxes and the other is actions in a lot of other different areas, which I will come to. The government is, essentially, absolutely dead wrong on its tax policies.

There is not an expert in the country or the world who believes that in order to become competitive, the best thing a country should do is to reduce its consumption taxes. The only economist in the land who might subscribe to that view is the Prime Minister of this country, but he lets his politics consistently get ahead of his economics.

There is unanimity among economists that if people want a competitive, thriving country, they have to be competitive in their income taxes and business taxes, but the worst thing is to reduce consumption taxes, which give nothing at all in terms of competitiveness and future prosperity.

• (1335)

Another thing on which I believe the experts are agreed is that we want broad-based tax relief. We do not want to micromanage who gets benefits and who does not get benefits. We do not want to pretend we are a social engineering government that believes the government knows best how each and every Canadian should spend their money: yes to sports, no to music.

That is another area in which this budget makes a mistake. There are tiny little tax credits here and there that some receive and others do not. Why not broad-based tax relief to benefit all Canadians and let Canadian families make their own decisions as to how to spend their money?

The third point is that this budget is in the long Conservative tradition of fiscal irresponsibility. From Diefenbaker, with his seven consecutive deficits, to Mulroney, who left a \$42 billion deficit to be cleaned up by an incoming Liberal government, to Mike Harris.

This is an interesting case because three senior government ministers were key architects of the Mike Harris government. Not only did he fire 10,000 civil servants, fire 8,000 nurses, some of whom had to be hired back because he had made a mistake but close 30 hospitals. One would think with all this slash and burn at least the Conservatives could balance their books. But no, they did not. They claimed to. But then when the Ontario Liberal government came in and called in the auditors, it turned out they had a deficit of \$5.6 billion. So from Diefenbaker, to Mulroney, to Harris, and looking south of the border, the biggest deficits are with Reagan and Bush, not with Clinton, who ran surpluses.

The government is following in that long irresponsible tradition. It is not in deficit yet. We left so much money that not even a Conservative government could go into deficit immediately. That would be very difficult. However, the Conservatives are skating very dangerously close to the edge.

They have abandoned that cushion which we call prudence, so that should there be a downturn or a negative shock somewhere, the finances of the nation will be cushioned against a return to deficit. They totally got rid of that. They think it is unnecessary. They have budgeted very small surpluses. They speak disparagingly about debt reduction as if it is excess taxation rather than paying down debt to the benefit of future generations. But they do not care about future generations because future generations will not vote in the next election.

So this, in addition to being a dishonest and visionless budget, it is a fiscally irresponsible budget in that long Conservative tradition which brings this country dangerously close to returning to deficits, to undoing the Chrétien legacy, the Martin legacy, and the Liberal legacy of getting us out of deficits, becoming the envy of the world, and paying down our debt. That was the engine of the strong growth that Canada has had in recent years and the government, with its fiscal irresponsibility, has put that at risk.

My last reason for opposing this budget, the fourth and final reason, is that it is a meanspirited budget. If a person is a disadvantaged Canadian or a vulnerable Canadian or a lower income Canadian, chances are this budget passes him or her over. If a person is a well-heeled Canadian, a traditional Conservative-supporting Canadian, chances are this budget treats him or her very well. And this we see again and again and again. We see this in the treatment of aboriginal people.

Government Orders

Arguably, there is no group in the whole country that has suffered more in terms of low living standards, poor health outcomes, and all of these major difficulties and yet, the government simply abandons Canada's aboriginal people. After years of work, we achieved unanimity with premiers, with aboriginal leaders, and with the federal government to make a real beginning to closing the gap between aboriginals and other Canadians.

• (1340)

The government is \$5 billion richer as a consequence of not proceeding with Kelowna and notwithstanding the sanctimonious comments of the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. The government is not doing anything. It has pulled out. It has pulled the rug from under Canada's least privileged group.

The budget is meanspirited with regard to aboriginals, farmers, Canada's regions, the north and particularly the environment. Those are all big losers in this meanspirited budget, this dishonest budget that—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): Order, please. I would like to remind the hon. member that when he referred to the last government, he probably meant the government of the right hon. member for LaSalle—Émard.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Peterborough.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the comments of the hon. member quite intently. He and I both serve on the finance committee. I find some of his remarks indicating that he was not paying attention perhaps in committee. We had some professional witnesses who specifically indicated that in this budget more than 200,000 additional low income Canadians will be completely removed from the tax rolls than in the last economic update put forward by the Liberal budget.

This budget also includes record spending in the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs. This budget also includes a cut in the GST, the only tax paid by low income Canadians who do not pay income tax. It is by its very nature a progressive tax cut. These are helpful measures.

Indeed, my riding, for instance, stands to benefit greatly from the universal child care benefit, an excess of \$5.4 million annually coming into my riding. I do not find that meanspirited.

I would like to ask the hon. member if he was paying attention when finance officials specifically told us that every Canadian in every tax bracket will pay less tax in this budget and that this budget benefits low income Canadians much more than any previous budget?

• (1345)

Hon. John McCallum: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is wrong on two counts. My authority is not myself but the economist, Dale Orr, who produced a report on the subject. As Mr. Orr stated in his report, the consequence of this budget, by reducing the basis personal amount, is indeed to add 200,000 low income Canadians to the tax rolls.

That is a fact stated by an economist. Contrary to the budget, which claims 600,000 low income Canadians are coming off the tax rolls, the reality, as confirmed by Mr. Orr, is that 200,000 Canadians

of low income are indeed being added to the tax rolls. So perhaps my colleague misheard the answer, but that was indeed what was stated by Mr. Orr in committee.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is always a great pleasure to listen to my colleague talk about the budget, particularly since, as a Liberal by trade, he has only recently been thrown out of the other side of this House. He is now in opposition.

I recall that during the 13 years of Liberal rule, and particularly during the last 11 years, we in the Bloc Québécois were continuously putting the question of the common good and improving people's lives back on the agenda. During that time, the Liberals were cutting transfers to the provinces, and not the least important transfers: health transfers, where there was a drastic cut starting in 1995; cuts in post-secondary education transfers, to such an extent that the education system everywhere in Canada has been undermined and we no longer know what to do to improve the level of infrastructure and the quality of education.

There were also cuts to social assistance for the most disadvantaged people and the tightening of the Employment Insurance Act. That meant that 60% of people who would ordinarily have been entitled to employment insurance were also thrown off, just as my colleague was thrown out of power a few months ago.

I wonder, if the common good was so important to him, how it is that when he was on the benches opposite and we were trying to persuade him that the government should take action in the public interest and for the common good, he did nothing? How can it be that this man, a colleague whom I do respect, did not stand up for the people, took part in, and even supported, measures that harmed the people, that raised the poverty rate and denied the unemployed the benefits they would ordinarily have been entitled to?

Hon. John McCallum: Mr. Speaker, the member is talking about the period in the 1990s when we had large deficits, \$40 billion, because of the Conservative government.

More recently, our government increased transfers to the provinces by extremely significant amounts. We increased health transfers by over \$40 billion. With equalization, our transfers rose by \$70 billion over 10 years. Today, the Conservatives are saying that we, the Liberals, are responsible for the fiscal imbalance. That is not the case; it is thanks to what the Liberals did, thanks to that \$70 billion, that we solved the problem of the fiscal imbalance. The Conservatives are trying to take credit for what the Liberals did.

What is very surprising is to see that the Bloc may support this budget. It does nothing to solve the fiscal imbalance. The only reason is that Bloc members know full well that they would lose seats in Quebec otherwise. That is the only reason.

[*English*]

Hon. Brenda Chamberlain (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I would like to begin my remarks about the new government's budget by referring to page 184 of the budget plan. I also want to make mention of the member for Markham—Unionville, because I do agree with his remarks that the Liberal government did a very good job in setting the fiscal stage.

Government Orders

The Conservatives' budget plan states:

On a total government, National Accounts basis:

Canada was the only G7 country to record a surplus in 2003, 2004 and 2005.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development...projects that Canada will be the only G7 country to record a surplus in both 2006 and 2007.

Canada's total government sector net debt burden declined to an estimated 26.4 per cent of gross domestic product...in 2005, and has been the lowest in the G7 since 2004.

Looking at the fiscal positions of the federal governments in Canada and the United States:

In 2004-05, the Canadian federal government posted a surplus of...\$1.5 billion or 0.1 per cent of the GDP, while the U.S. federal government incurred an "on-budget" deficit of US \$494 billion or 4.0 per cent of GDP.

For this reason and many more that are quoted in this Conservative document, the Liberal Party positioned this country very strongly. That is a good thing for all Canadians and it is really important that we as parliamentarians do not squander this. We have to work together to do what is best for Canadians. This annex to the document says that the previous government did do a good job in helping to restore the finances of the nation. As part of that former government, I suppose I should thank the members opposite for that compliment. It is appreciated.

Canadians know that our country and our economy were in trouble in 1993. Unemployment was soaring. Interest rates were skyrocketing. The national debt was on the verge of being unmanageable. That was under the leadership of a Conservative government. When we came into office, tough choices had to be made to put Canada back on the right track.

Mr. Speaker, I know that you were there on the government benches and I know that you remember these accomplishments.

We restored the nation's finances by eliminating the \$42 billion Conservative deficit, balancing the budget eight consecutive times, paying down the debt by \$63 billion, cutting taxes by \$150 billion, and reinvesting over \$100 billion in health care. Unemployment today stands at a 30 year low and interest rates are down from 12% in 1993 to 4%. This means that people can afford to buy new homes and new automobiles. The after tax incomes of Canadians are up 11% from 1993.

I do not believe that any incoming government in recent memory has ever come into office with the government in a stronger financial position, but we are here today to discuss the current government's budget and this is what I would like to move on to.

Unfortunately, this budget does fall short. This budget is all about missed opportunities. With the strong performance of the Canadian economy and the federal government's strong fiscal position, so much more could have been done for Canadians.

Before the members opposite get too excited, I will say that this budget is not all bad. To the government's credit, whether it is good or bad for Canada and Canadians, this budget does what the Conservative Party said it would do, but in so many instances the measures in this budget are poor public policy.

To begin with, let us look at the tax plan. This budget proposes a raft of tiny cuts and tax credits for just about everything.

As the mother and spouse of skilled tradesmen, I can support some of the measures in the budget around apprenticeship and tradespeople, such as the apprenticeship job creation tax credit of up to \$2,000 for two years, the apprenticeship incentive grant of \$1,000 for the first two years of the red seal apprenticeship program, and the deductibility of the cost of tools.

● (1350)

These are good measures. I applaud the government for putting them in. I think these measures are small, but they are indeed positive steps to take. They are good steps.

Similarly, having regularly met with faculty, staff and students at the University of Guelph, I know that other fiscal measures in this budget are helpful, such as the elimination of federal income tax on scholarships, bursaries and fellowships, the creation of the new textbook tax credit, and expanding the eligibility for Canada's student loan program.

But if the government had really wanted to help Canadians, if the government had really wanted to give them a tax break that they would notice and benefit from, the members opposite would implore the Minister of Finance to abandon the plans to reduce the GST and instead deliver income tax cuts. A cut is not increasing tax rates from 15% to 15.5%. It is not.

When it comes to the issue of a GST cut versus an income tax cut, the merits of the latter over the former have been replayed endlessly by economists, academics, public policy analysts and the media. *National Post* columnists are stating

—cutting the GST...is the single worst wrong turn in the budget: given Canada's plummeting household savings rates, given our heavy reliance on income taxes, given our urgent need to raise productivity, the very last thing we should be doing is cutting consumption taxes.

I am not sure that much more needs to be said, but I know that the new Prime Minister is not taking any lessons from the national press, that is for sure, because he is not talking to them.

I have spoken in the House many times about health care. It is the number one priority for Canadians. In my community of Guelph, we are no different. I am glad to see the government confirm our 10 year health care plan. I am also supportive of its commitment to continue working to address wait times, although I would have liked to have seen some details on its plans to accomplish this.

There is the shortage of doctors. The wait to see specialists continues to be way too long. There is the shortage of mental health care spaces, an area that we need help in. With an aging population, the stresses placed on the health care system will only increase. More must be done. I would have liked to see more on these particular initiatives in the budget.

We all know of the events this past weekend involving the arrests of individuals accused of plotting death and destruction right here in our country. These are very, very serious things that are happening. I want to thank the men and women of our security services for their hard work and their dedication and for preventing a potential disaster.

Statements by Members

I am glad to see that the budget provides them with increased funding. More money for more officers and more training for the RCMP are good things. More money to prevent youth crime is a good thing. More money to prepare for emergencies is a good thing. These are good initiatives that I think all members in the House could support. Those particular things are excellent.

Going from the good to the bad, though, the concerns of my community with respect to child care are inadequately addressed by this budget. Today approximately 84% of both parents are in the workforce and 70% of women with children under the age of six are employed.

In my own community, waiting lists for licensed child care programs continue to grow and surpass the number of child care spaces. In Guelph, wait lists for infant child care average about 70 children ahead. Some centres have wait lists of over 200 infants. There are as many as 30 families waiting for a single toddler space at any one child care program. Children under the age of six in my own community outnumber licensed child care spaces by over 8,000. Parents wait for a space for up to two years.

Leaving the creation of child care spaces up to others through tax incentives lacks the commitment needed to address the needs of parents and children. If I can liken this to health care, if years ago we had only given people ago \$100 a month for health care, we would never have had the infrastructure of a health care system. The same thing goes for child care. Until we as a government want to commit to an infrastructure program, this will never ever happen across this great country.

• (1355)

There is no real or meaningful assistance for low income families. Nor does it help people who care for our children. I have listened to my constituents and those who work as child caregivers. They too worry about the future of creating quality child care spaces. They have asked me how qualified staff be enticed to work—

• (1400)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): The hon. member for Brandon—Souris.

Mr. Merv Tweed (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the comments of the hon. member, as well as the member for Markham—Unionville, and I have one question. I was here this morning and I am certain the hon. member for Markham—Unionville in particular was here, but I am not certain about the other member.

With all the objections to Bill C-13, why did the member or any of her colleagues not vote against the bill this morning?

Hon. Brenda Chamberlain: Mr. Speaker, this hon. member was in the health committee wondering why the Conservatives had not enacted the health commission they had promised in November. That also is a very important issue to Canadians. It is very—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): When we return to the debate on Bill C-13, there will be 4 minutes and 12 seconds left for questions and comments for the hon. member.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

NORTHUMBERLAND—QUINTE WEST

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as summer vacation nears, I would like to invite all of Canada to visit our great tourist destinations in Northumberland—Quinte West. We are the gateway to eastern Ontario. Steeped in history, shopping for all, the arts, entertainment and golf, yes, we have it all.

In Trenton, visit the Royal Canadian Air Force Museum or fish in the Bay of Quinte. A quick boat ride up the Trent River will bring people to a myriad of locks on the historic river system.

Stop in Frankford or Campbellford for a visit to the chocolate factory, Empire Cheese or enjoy a Northumberland ale, a nice lunch in Hastings or a round of golf in Warkworth.

In Brighton, take in the historic Proctor House or a play at the Brighton Barn Theatre.

Visit the Big Apple in Colborne. Enjoy the vistas of Lake Ontario from Cobourg's Victoria Park. Shop the historic Main Street of Port Hope or take in a play at the Capitol Theatre. Visit our farming families during the rural ramble.

Yes, Northumberland—Quinte West truly is the jewel in the crown of eastern Ontario.

* * *

HOCKEYVILLE

Mr. Ken Boshcoff (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the town of Atikokan is carrying the hopes and dreams of northwestern Ontario's hockey lovers on its shoulders as the community skates its way to the Hockeyville contest finals.

Atikokan is a town with a huge heart and tremendous esprit de corps. Despite facing difficult community challenges, they continue to rise above those trials by working together. Residents of Atikokan display the true definition of community spirit and are justly worthy of the title of “Canada's Hockeyville”.

When the Hockeyville team visited Atikokan, it witnessed a demonstration of pride that was overwhelming. The whole town showed up for the parade and, indeed, every lamp post, every corner lot, every business and home was flying the flag of Hockeyville. It was an emotional weekend, and Atikokan is enjoying the energetic support of every community in northwestern Ontario, an area larger than France.

The people of Atikokan believe in themselves. They believe in the greatness of the sport of hockey. I am honoured to be representing a community soon to be known as “Hockeyville”.

Statements by Members

[Translation]

POVERTY

Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, June 6 is National Hunger Awareness Day. According to the Canadian Association of Food Banks, more than 820,000 Canadians, 40% of them children, visit food banks every month. In a document released in 2005, the Conference Board of Canada said: "Canada's high rate of child poverty is shocking for a country ranked among the wealthiest in the world".

In Canada, one child in six lives in poverty. These are frightening figures, especially since we know that poverty is the main barrier to social inclusion and full citizen involvement. By refusing to adequately fund Quebec and the provinces for social transfers and social housing, the federal government is choosing to attack the poor rather than attack poverty.

We can eliminate hunger in Canada. All it takes is the political will to do so.

* * *

[English]

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Ms. Denise Savoie (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week I had the privilege of taking part in the Canadian delegation at the G-8 meetings on post-secondary education where I learned, above all, that proactive leadership is required for federal governments to develop the minds and skills that drive our economies and civil society.

[Translation]

The ministers present agreed that it was vital to adopt national lifelong learning strategies, including early learning and on-the-job training, to develop Canada's human capital.

● (1405)

[English]

I am proud that my riding of Victoria is a champion of lifelong learning, with over 130 knowledge advancing facilities in the downtown core. Projects like Workforce 21 link education providers, business and local governments to coordinate the skills we teach with the skills we need.

However, such an issue does require more than drive-by funding tactics of previous governments. They require a comprehensive pan-Canadian—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Nanaimo—Alberni.

* * *

HOCKEYVILLE

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Port Alberni on Vancouver Island has been selected among the top 25 contenders in the CBC Kraft Hockeyville competition. Tonight on CBC, the field of champions will be reduced to 10.

Despite tough economic times, the citizens of Port Alberni never fail to band together and work for the good of the community. They

raised an amazing \$2.7 million to build a multiplex arena, home of the Alberni Valley Bulldogs Junior A team.

Chamber meetings, council meetings, every organization try to avoid a conflict with the Bulldogs game.

This city of about 20,000 has set the standard for community involvement. It is the only British Columbia city to have hosted all four provincial games, the winter games, the summer games, the senior games and the disability games

Officials in Port Alberni have been so touched by the struggles of other communities in the competition that they are now offering to share their expertise in community development.

I invite all Canadians to tune in to CBC tonight at 8 p.m. Cheer for all the worthy communities and vote Port Alberni for the title of Hockeyville. Go Port!

* * *

HOCKEYVILLE

Hon. Shawn Murphy (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to contradict the previous speaker and add my support to a remarkable group from my constituency.

Over the past few months, the Hockey Mommas have been leading the campaign to have Charlottetown crowned as Hockeyville, the Canadian community that displays exemplary community spirit and dedication to hockey.

The Hockey Mommas are a group of 25 women, many of whom have never played hockey before. They first formed a team just to have fun. But the Mommas, in their distinctive pink jerseys, soon became known for their ability to create awareness and fundraise for breast cancer initiatives while playing hockey.

When offered the opportunity to spearhead Charlottetown's bid for the CBC Hockeyville challenge, the Mommas pooled their talents and created a video entry that won them a spot in the top 25 out of 450 entries in Canada. We are all eager to view their second entry for tonight's show, which I am sure will convince many, if not all Canadians, to vote for Charlottetown.

Charlottetown's spirit for hockey and Hockeyville is contagious. The Hockey Mommas have certainly shown the residents of Charlottetown what it means to have hockey spirit.

As the Hockey Mommas say, "If Charlottetown isn't Hockeyville, we simply can't imagine where is".

* * *

D-DAY

Mr. Brian Storseth (Westlock—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on this day 62 years ago Canadian troops landed in Normandy, France on Juno Beach.

Today in our nation and in nations across the western world, veterans, families and everyone who enjoy the freedoms we have today, remember and honour the anniversary of the D-Day landings.

Statements by Members

Fourteen thousand Canadians landed on that day. Through the early morning shrouds of darkness, they stormed the beach under heavy fire. Three hundred and forty Canadian servicemen died, 574 were wounded and 47 were taken prisoner, all on that single day.

We remember their sacrifice and we remember their accomplishment. They were the centrepiece of an allied attack that was the turning point in the war. These servicemen, who came from across the country, faced a formidable and determined enemy, but they did not back down from the challenge. They met the test of their times with courage and bravery.

We all owe them a great debt.

* * *

[*Translation*]

LA TUQUE

Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last week the people in my riding stood by helplessly as the area suffered another extreme weather event. Following torrential rains in localized parts of the area that includes the city of La Tuque, hundreds of permanent residents and vacationers were completely isolated when roads were cut and bridges washed out by the raging water.

Having flown over the affected areas on Saturday, I can confirm that this is a major catastrophe and that, luckily, no lives were lost.

I want to commend the mayor, Réjean Gaudreault, the city manager, Yves Tousignant, and the head of public safety, Serge Buisson, for responding to this unfortunate event so rapidly and with such professionalism.

The Bloc Québécois salutes their outstanding organization and wishes the residents well.

* * *

•(1410)

[*English*]

ATLANTIC CANADA OPPORTUNITIES AGENCY

Mr. Fabian Manning (Avalon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, 19 years ago today the former Conservative government, with a vision and commitment to Atlantic Canada, announced the creation of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency. Known as ACOA, this organization has assisted many communities, organizations, businesses and individuals throughout those years.

Working side by side with provincial governments, ACOA has played a vital role in the economic development of Atlantic Canada. Investments have been made in manufacturing, innovation, tourism and science. I can travel throughout my own riding of Avalon and witness first-hand positive initiatives that are producing solid economic activities which in turn are creating secure employment opportunities.

Throughout the last federal election, Liberal Party members travelled throughout Atlantic Canada attempting to convince voters that our Conservative Party, if elected, would eliminate ACOA. It was another desperate Liberal ploy that just did not work.

ACOA is alive and well under the new government and I believe secure in the hands of our very capable minister from the riding of Central Nova. The voters of Atlantic Canada do not have to be convinced of ACOA's role in the future. It is here to stay.

Happy 19th birthday ACOA. We hope it lives to be 100.

* * *

HOCKEYVILLE

Ms. Nancy Karetak-Lindell (Nunavut, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us get something straight. Hockeyville is Rankin Inlet, Nunavut.

From the welcome sign decorated with caribou antlers as people arrive in Rankin Inlet, which lets them know that Rankin is a hockey town and the proud home of Jordin Tootoo, the first Inuk to play in the National Hockey League, to the beautiful handcrafted clothing patterned after hockey jerseys worn by young and old, Rankin Inlet is Hockeyville.

Rankin Inlet is Hockeyville because of the diehard fans, dedicated volunteers, team spirit and the sheer love of the game. Here everyone's life is affected by hockey, whether by being a coach, a referee, a volunteer, a billet or supporter of a hockey team.

Showcasing an Arctic community to be Hockeyville for Canada says it all about how united and inclusive our country is as well as exciting and unique in our love of hockey.

The puck stops here. Vote for Rankin Inlet as Hockeyville and be truly Canadian.

* * *

CANADIAN FORCES

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is ironic that instead of being ashamed of his party's 13 year legacy of neglect and funding cuts of our military, the member for Vancouver South had the gall to criticize the Conservative government's procurement practices.

May I remind the Liberal Party members of the ongoing mess created by them, their old boss Jean Chrétien and others who with the stroke of a pen and for purely political reasons wiped out the Sea King replacement contract. This neglect continued under the last prime minister, I might add. In fact his colleague, for the moment at least, the member for Kings—Hants, stated that there was not a better example of a case where public policy was sacrificed on the altar of political expediency. That is what he said.

Compare that to this government's unqualified support for our men and women in the military, with our budget increase by over \$5.3 billion, accelerated recruitment and expanded training. We are committed to reverse that party's legacy of neglect. This Conservative government believes in our forces and in equipping them appropriately to do the job.

*Oral Questions***THE ENVIRONMENT**

Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a few weeks ago I received an e-mail from a constituent, Margaret Harris of New Westminster. She described how she and over 30 employees of Building Insight Technologies in Vancouver were recently laid off because of the government's cancellation of the EnerGuide for houses retrofit incentive program.

Ms. Harris wrote, "This was a great program and I am furious that the federal government chose to be so callous and deceptive in the way they chose to announce this cancellation". She went on to ask that I let the government know that this is not acceptable.

She is right. This is totally unacceptable. The Conservatives have cut the most productive made in Canada programs that were helping low income Canadians and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

The Liberals let our greenhouse gas emissions soar by over 35% and now the Conservatives are cutting green jobs and creating more pollution. This is totally outrageous.

* * *

[Translation]

OPERATION: LAST CHANCE

Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today marks the launch of a very important national campaign.

[English]

The Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center for Holocaust Studies will launch Operation: Last Chance this afternoon on Parliament Hill.

• (1415)

[Translation]

Those attending the event will be the Israeli ambassador, His Excellency Alan Baker, the Israeli director of the Simon Wiesenthal Centre, Mr. Ephraim Zuroff, MPs, senators and a number of guests.

[English]

This campaign is designed to locate all Nazi war criminals within Canada who have evaded prosecution.

[Translation]

As Canadians, we must be proud that the fight led by Simon Wiesenthal to the end of his life is being continued. This campaign honours the thought of the man who said, "When history looks back, I want people to know that the Nazis could not kill millions of people with impunity."

[English]

Thanks to the Friends of the Simon Wiesenthal Center for Holocaust Studies, we will never forget.

[Translation]

We will not forget him.

MONDIAL DES CULTURES

Ms. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to invite the members of this House and the people of Quebec and elsewhere to come to Drummondville between July 6 and 16 on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Mondial des Cultures.

This cultural event, which features dancers from around the world, has gained a reputation over the years and speaks of Quebec's openness to the world.

Every year, over 300,000 people come to this exceptional festival and join in the dance fever that overtakes Drummondville.

Burundi, Colombia, Spain, Finland, India, Japan and Turkey are some of the 14 countries represented by over 1,000 artists taking part in this event, which is a link in the chain of fraternity and peace among all peoples.

I congratulate and thank the team responsible for organizing it and the thousands of volunteers who, for the past 25 years, have made the Mondial des Cultures a success and the pride of our city.

* * *

[English]

HUMAN RIGHTS

Hon. Roy Cullen (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this past weekend a mosque in my riding, the International Muslims Organization, was a target of vandals. While this may have been just the reckless act of teenagers, it does raise the ugly spectre of hate in our community.

We must never allow this type of malicious and hateful act to become commonplace anywhere in our country. Hate breeds hate and leads to a cycle of violence which, as we have seen in other parts of the world, leads only to sadness and misery.

Canada is committed to the elimination of hatred and violence in all its forms and takes pride in the fact that our society is one that is based on peace, tolerance, compassion and understanding and the rule of law. No one in Canada is above the law.

As Canadians, we must all remain vigilant and united if we are to protect the values and morals which we hold so dear.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Bill Graham (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, some American media are seriously distorting the reality around last weekend's arrests in Toronto. CNN labeled one report "the enemy north of the border". On the FOX news channel, the Prime Minister's network of choice in the past, our border was labelled a gateway for terrorists, all of which is affecting our ability to resolve key issues like the border and passports.

What specific actions has the Prime Minister taken, or directed our ambassador to take, to respond to these inaccurate and damaging media reports south of the border?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday, on balance we have actually been satisfied with coverage of these events in the United States, but the government does have concerns about specific media reports and the reactions of specific individuals in branches of the United States government.

I have spoken to my equivalent in the United States, the President. I know that our ministers have been in contact with cabinet ministers in the United States. I spoke last night to Ambassador Wilson about our embassy's ongoing efforts to make sure that we have full and accurate media reporting that genuinely reflects, I think, what most Americans understand, and that is our shared concern about the security of this continent.

Hon. Bill Graham (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is all very well, but members will recall that the former ambassador often took to the airwaves directly to defend Canada's interests and to respond directly to damaging inaccurate attacks. Unfortunately, American legislators have also joined the chorus of who blames Canada. One has said there is a large al-Qaeda presence in Canada. Another calls for a physical barrier along with the rapid implementation of the new U.S. passport law.

How does the Prime Minister intend to take these issues directly to American lawmakers? He must act before his visit in July because most American legislators will not be in Washington when he gets there. He must be careful to give an answer in the House which is more responsive than his answer yesterday about the Oilers, which seemed to have jinxed them in their game last night.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Ambassador Wilson has been on the airwaves in the United States. Members of this government have been, unlike the previous government, in constant contact with their American counterparts, which is why our initiatives have been received so well by those in authority in the United States. It is why we are making progress on things like the passport issue.

I will predict it will not be difficult to exceed the Stanley Cup record of that party's government, which did not win a single Stanley Cup for Canada in 13 years.

• (1420)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Bill Graham (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, hockey aside, statements made by certain members of Congress are unacceptable. One member of Congress claimed that our immigration system is responsible for the presence of many members of al-Qaeda in this country. Canadians are justifiably proud of our immigration system, which is based on the values of acceptance and respect.

Since the government is so proud of being in with the Bush administration and has so much contact with it, as the Prime Minister said, how will he defend the values upon which our Canadian immigration system is based before the U.S. Congress?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, such statements were made out of ignorance and without correct information in both the United States and Canada.

I can tell the Leader of the Opposition that clearly, the United States is generally safer with this government's security policies than with those of the former government.

* * *

[*English*]

EQUALIZATION

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. President—Mr. Chair—Mr. Speaker, last week the finance minister—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, order. Hon. members are used to the Speaker getting incorrect names. It is quite satisfactory.

The hon. member for Markham—Unionville has the floor now and we will want to hear the question.

Hon. John McCallum: Mr. Speaker, maybe I was getting into the nomenclature favoured by the Prime Minister.

Last week the finance minister graciously credited the Liberals with largely solving the fiscal imbalance through the \$41 billion health accord, something the government is now trying to take credit for and is using to back out of campaign promises.

On the subject of promises, will the government honour its commitment that no province will be made worse off under the new equalization formula, and if not, who are the losers?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I refuse to answer the question about anyone being a loser on the other side. I think that would be improper and I will not do that.

I think the question relates to the report that Mr. O'Brien and his colleagues have delivered. It is a very helpful report and I commend it to all members and Canadians to read. It makes various recommendations with respect to equalization. It is another report. There are other reports, as the member opposite knows.

All of those reports will be taken into consideration when the finance ministers meet at the end of the month and as discussions take place among Canadians. The reports are not conclusive with respect to the ultimate result. As the member opposite knows, there is a wide divergence of—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Markham—Unionville.

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, even though he went over time, there was no answer on whether there would be any losers, and no guarantee.

Last week the Prime Minister invited provinces to occupy the tax room that he had vacated by cutting the GST. In plain language, he is inviting provinces to raise the sales tax paid by hard-working Canadians, totally cancelling out the effect of his GST cut. Why did he not come clean during the election and say that his solution to the fiscal imbalance involved provinces raising sales tax to replace the GST cut? That would have been honest.

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there are many proposals on the table.

Speaking of being honest, I am sure the member opposite remembers some of his colleagues who actually look on the bright side, the sunny side of the budget, like the chief economist at RBC Financial Group, who said, “The pleasant surprises we saw—reductions in income taxes, continued reduction in debt and more focus on tax relief—are all positives in today’s budget”. That is from the chief economist at RBC.

I thank the members opposite for agreeing with the chief economist at RBC and supporting the budget at third reading today.

* * *

• (1425)

[Translation]

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has promised many times to govern in a responsible and transparent manner. Yesterday on Radio-Canada we learned that the government was going to acquire over \$3 billion worth of military planes without a call for tenders or spinoffs for the Canadian aircraft industry, which is concentrated for the most part in Montreal.

What is driving the Prime Minister to make a quick \$3 billion plus purchase without a call for tenders and without any economic spinoff for Canada and Quebec?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government has not made such a decision. When we do contemplate such decisions, we will have a purchasing process that is free of political interference.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like the Prime Minister to give a clear answer.

Does having a purchasing process free of political interference mean there will be a call for tenders and will this call for tenders include conditions with respect to economic spinoffs for the aircraft industry in Canada and Quebec, which is mainly concentrated in Montreal? Can he respond clearly to that question?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I just said, such a decision has not been made at this time. If the government intends to have a purchasing process, it will be free of political interference. At the same time, our process will take into account the economic benefits for Canada.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, no decision has been made. This also tells us that there are risks involved. As the saying goes, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

An untendered purchase over \$3 billion is enormous. It is even more surprising because the government has not yet submitted its strategic procurement plan to the Standing Committee on National Defence.

Before throwing billions of dollars around to buy equipment such as these planes, without any economic benefit for Canada and

Oral Questions

Quebec, should the government not immediately submit its defence procurement plan to the Standing Committee on National Defence?

[English]

Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, no decision has been made on equipment. The government has not made any decision. When it does, it will be to the benefit, first, of the military, second, of Canadians, and third, of industry, which will get industrial benefits.

[Translation]

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we would like to caution the government. We know that the Prime Minister is a big fan of President Bush and a big fan of the Australian Prime Minister, Mr. Howard.

Does the Prime Minister believe for a second that President Bush or Prime Minister Howard would rush headlong into a \$3 billion purchase without the assurance of economic benefits for their respective countries? Never. Why is he trying to do it here and why will he not immediately give us all the facts?

[English]

Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is dealing in theoreticals. We have not made a decision on projects. When we do, there will be industrial benefits. All major projects involve industrial benefits.

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THE ENVIRONMENT

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to climate change, Canadians have been calling on the government to act for some time, but now the calls are coming internationally.

Deputy Prime Minister of the United Kingdom John Prescott was in Montreal yesterday. By the way, the United Kingdom, a country that is achieving its Kyoto targets and then some and has a very strong economy, perhaps the strongest in 200 years, is calling on Canada to respect its international obligations.

How much more humiliation is Canada going to have to suffer before the government tables a plan to do something about greenhouse gas emissions?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, this government has already begun to table a plan. It tabled a plan in the budget to deal with the development of renewable fuels and to encourage public transport.

Unfortunately, that member and his party voted against those measures and instead voted, I suppose, to support the woeful neglect of the previous government that left us 35% behind target.

We will not accept that. We will move forward.

Oral Questions

●(1430)

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the fact is that when Prime Minister John Howard was here just a few weeks ago, the Prime Minister indicated that Canada would join the so-called Asia-Pacific partnership to deal with greenhouse emissions. This partnership has no timetables, no mechanisms whatsoever, and no targets and goals. In fact, the United States Congress has just pulled \$50 million out of this so-called partnership.

My question is for the Prime Minister. Does he intend to go ahead and become part of this Asia-Pacific partnership? If so, will he honour his campaign promise and bring that matter here for a motion and a vote in the House?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think the government has made very clear that it intends to work with its partners here in Canada, in North America and around the world to ensure not only that we do our part to reduce greenhouse gases but that we have an effective international treaty in this regard that involves all the countries of the planet.

That is why the Minister of the Environment is co-president of the international process that is taking place right now and, I should say, is doing an excellent job.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Vancouver South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, could the Minister of National Defence confirm that under international trade and arms regulations the C-17 aircraft the Canadian government plans to purchase from the United States would carry with it a veto for the U.S. over where in the world that aircraft could be flown?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government has made no decisions on any equipment, as I have said a number of times in this House, but I would like to quote the member, who had a press conference yesterday. He said:

The Conservatives campaigned on strategic airlift acquisitions. Once in government, they refuse to deviate from their political platform.

I can understand why somebody from the Liberal Party would say something like that, because they deviate from their platforms all the time.

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Vancouver South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we do not support their political platform. We support the needs of the military, as articulated by General Hillier.

The reality, contrary to a well-established tradition, is that the maintenance of the aircraft would be done by the Americans, the aircraft would spend most of their time on American soil, we do not have any hangars for them, and the Americans would have a veto on where they could fly. Is that the Conservatives' "Canada first" policy, being second in command of our own fleet?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have said previously, we have not made any decisions with respect to equipment.

Let me point out that the member voted against the military. He has no interest in the military. He knows nothing about the military,

so he is a hypocrite to be standing up here and talking about the military.

[Translation]

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Outremont, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Industry.

For the first time in the history of Canada the government is preparing to have its equipment abroad maintained by foreigners, thus giving up its control, its sovereignty and its jobs.

As the minister responsible for economic impact, did the minister at least oppose the awarding of a cozy little \$3 billion contract to Boeing, USA?

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as my hon. colleague has just said, there has been no agreement or transaction yet. So he is speculating on the future, before he knows what it is.

That said, as Minister of Industry, I am indeed responsible for the program of benefits for Canadians. Whatever commitment the government makes will be in keeping with our policy and ensure benefits for all Canadians.

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Outremont, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, his responsibility is to ensure a contract of such a size benefits Canadian industry.

Why is he continuing to grovel before the Minister of National Defence?

●(1435)

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there will be economic benefits for Canadians if a contract is signed. That is my role and responsibility. I will assume my role with considerable pleasure, as usual.

* * *

AGRICULTURE

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government was hesitant in the past to defend supply management in the negotiations with the WTO. Yesterday Pascal Lamy, the director-general of the organization, warned Canada that it will have to make further efforts if it wants the negotiations to succeed.

We know that the Europeans and the Americans are challenging supply management. The government says it is for supply management and the House has spoken unanimously in its favour.

Will the Minister repeat to Mr. Lamy that there is no question of dropping supply management and that there will be no compromise?

Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I met with the director-general, Mr. Lamy, last Sunday. I said that we were committed to defending the agricultural interests of Canada, including supply management systems. I also clearly said that Canada is committed to remaining at the table until the end of the negotiations so as to obtain the best results for our agricultural sector as a whole.

Oral Questions

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, foreign countries already have access to 5% of our market under supply management. For certain products, such as hatching eggs, that access increases to close to 20%, even though those same countries, on average, are opening only 2.5% of their protected markets.

Instead of calling supply management into question by trying to weaken it, can the minister require the Europeans and Americans to open their markets and make the same effort as Canada has made since 1996?

Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we supported the supply management system during and after the election campaign, as we support it today. Interestingly enough, Mr. Lamy sees no problems with maintaining the Canadian supply management system within the WTO framework. There is no problem: we support the supply management system. That was the case yesterday, it is the case now and it will be the case tomorrow.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the federal government has just unveiled its new pilot project—replacing former pilot project number 6—which covers 21 administrative regions and eliminates three. The three regions eliminated have an unemployment rate of less than eight per cent, the others have a higher rate.

Will the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development explain why the greater Montreal area, with an unemployment rate of 9.4%, is not eligible for these assistance measures?

[English]

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as we explained in the House, the original pilot project included 24 regions where seasonal workers had a tough time finding work in the off season because there was already high unemployment in those areas.

Our extension of this project has been modified to make it more efficient and more effective, but to be effective and as a pilot project that we can analyze, we need to maintain certain standards including the areas where this work is done. That is why Montreal was excluded and why other ones where the employment rate has dropped down to below 6% were excluded as well.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister's response just does not cut it because the unemployed in Montreal and the many seasonal workers in the area also have rights.

How can this government justify the fact that five of the regions included in the pilot project have an unemployment rate in the neighbourhood of eight per cent while the greater Montreal area, with a rate above nine per cent, is not covered by this program? What explanation is there for this injustice?

[English]

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I explained once or twice in

the House before, a pilot project is a test. It is done with a sampling of the total population to see if it is worth applying across the country. That is why we are going with the sample that we started with and that is why we are going to continue with it. We were pleased to extend this program to areas where there is high unemployment and where seasonal workers are having a tough time finding new jobs. I look forward to seeing the results.

* * *

MEMBER FOR CALGARY WEST

Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, allegations have arisen that the member for Calgary West falsified travel expenses and illegally used taxpayer money to repay questionable loans he received from a former staffer.

The moral bar was never very high for that member who once called Nelson Mandela a terrorist and worked as a paid—

• (1440)

The Speaker: Order, please. I warn the hon. member to be judicious in his choice of language in repeating allegations in the preamble to the question. I do not know where the question is going because I am not sure we have hit on the administrative responsibility of the government yet, but I would caution the hon. member from making statements about hon. members' personal finances. He might want to be more careful and proceed directly to his question.

Mr. Mark Holland: Mr. Speaker, there have been allegations of both fraud and corruption and the question is very simple. When will the Prime Minister call in the RCMP to deal with these questions? Would the Prime Minister tell the House if these are common fundraising practices within the Conservative Party and its predecessors?

The Speaker: I have grave reservations about the propriety of that question. It sounded to me as though it has something to do with the hon. member's dealings with the House of Commons. Why this would be the administrative responsibility of the government is beyond me. I may have missed it.

However, if the hon. member has a supplementary question that is in order, I will hear it.

Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, reports today also stated that staff for the Calgary West MP were drawing salaries for working on a campaign for the Prime Minister.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I think we will move on. I do not believe the dealings of hon. members with the House of Commons have anything to do with the administrative responsibility of the government. If the hon. member wants to ask a question directly without the preambles I will hear it but I have grave reservations of where this is going from what I am hearing.

Mr. Mark Holland: Mr. Speaker, I want to know if the Prime Minister finds it acceptable to use staff members who work on campaigns and what staff members were involved in the campaigns. Furthermore, when will he and the Conservative Party pay back for the abuses that have occurred?

Oral Questions

The Speaker: If the hon. government House leader wishes to respond to this in some way without going into the specific hon. member's question, he can respond.

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was that hon. member who raised this and I am very disappointed that he would raise it in this manner. He knows this is improper. This is the case of a terminated employee who was issued a writ of summons and started a court case. It is before the courts and it should be left there. I am very disappointed, as are, I am sure, other members of the House, that he would raise this in this manner. It is shameful.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting that they are now saying we should not talk about this outside the courts. When we were in power, this same party wanted to ask questions and demanded that our ministers step down.

The President of the Treasury Board and the Minister of Finance did not see anything wrong with using money they both earned as members of provincial parliament or money from their employees to campaign for the Conservative party last year.

Will the Prime Minister ensure that the RCMP investigates the serious allegations surrounding the hon. member for Calgary West?

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: Order, please.

I have already explained that questions on an hon. member's expenses having to do with House administration are not the responsibility of the government in this House. This is quite clear, as I already said. In my opinion, the question is out of order.

The hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine.

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting that this Conservative government, which claims to champion responsibility and accountability, refuses to say what it will do with an hon. member of its own caucus who is under serious allegations of misusing public funds. I would like my question to be answered, please.

•(1445)

[*English*]

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the matter is before the courts. The hon. member should know, or surely there are some people in her party who would let her know, that an issue like this is a matter for the Board of Internal Economy. They know all about this. Why would they do this during question period? It is unfair to the process, unfair to the member and unfair to everyone in the House. She should know better.

* * *

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the community of Kashechewan has been evacuated three times in the last 15 months due to flooding, sewage backup or water

quality issues. The Liberal government made promises and did not follow through.

The Minister of Indian Affairs has said that he is committed to rebuilding Kashechewan. Could the minister please explain to the House his plan for this community?

Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to advise the House today that we are taking action on this issue. I will be appointing the former Ontario cabinet minister, Mr. Alan Pope, today as a federal special representative. Mr. Pope will be in Kashechewan tomorrow, will consult through the summer and will report back in the fall.

The previous government refused to acknowledge the mere existence of the problem and deal with it. This government is committed to act. We are committed to working together with the first nation and with the provincial government to examine this matter and to report back.

* * *

[*Translation*]

TRANSPORT

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, consultations are not action. Last week, the Minister of Transport said that the railway system did not have any problems that would justify an inquiry. A series of accidents in the Mauricie has shown just how costly the privatization policies of the previous Liberal government and then this government have been both for the environment and in terms of human lives.

For months now, we have been asking the minister to conduct an inquiry in order to shed light on the rising number of accidents. But the minister always refuses.

How many accidents do there have to be before the Prime Minister makes the right decision?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week when I appeared before the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, certain presentations were made by officials from my department. They were able to provide suitable, satisfactory answers to all the questions that the hon. member had.

Insofar as safety is concerned, Transport Canada is always trying to improve safety, not only for rail but also for all the other methods of transportation that Canadians use.

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, clearly with the government it is safety last. The minister should stop and think about the public interest.

The numbers are staggering: 195 main track derailments in 2005, a jump of 28% from 2004. Trains are jumping the rails, hitting pedestrians and vehicles and damaging the environment. It is an epidemic. B.C. is still dealing with the consequences of these derailments, such as the contamination near Squamish.

Oral Questions

Will the minister assume full responsibility for the lives that may be lost due to his inability to do the right thing?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Transport Canada assumes a responsibility to ensure our railways and, of course, other modes of transportation are safe and secure for Canadians to use. Yes, unfortunately, there are cases where there are mishaps, incidents that occur, but our officials are there to take care of it and we build on the information that is gathered pursuant to the investigations that are taking place.

* * *

CANADA POST

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week the Minister of Transport was asked a question about rural mail delivery. At that time he promised to meet with the Prime Minister, presumably because the Prime Minister makes all the decisions around here, and then get back to the House.

Has the minister consulted with the Prime Minister and, if so, what is the Prime Minister allowing him to say about this particular issue?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this issue has been raised, not only by members on this side of the House, but also by members on the other side of the House.

As some members may know, there are over 840,000 rural mailboxes across the country. This government and this party is committed to maintaining the traditional rural mail delivery and this has been indicated to the officials of Canada Post. We will do what it takes to do that.

• (1450)

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): I take it, Mr. Speaker, that the minister has not been allowed to say anything at all.

One hundred years of rural mail delivery is in jeopardy, mail routes used since Confederation are apparently now dangerous, workers in the field of mail delivery are now at risk and Canada Post puts the boots to rural Canada. It is time for a decision to be made by the minister.

Prime Minister, will you allow the minister to make a decision?

The Speaker: The Speaker will allow the minister to answer the question.

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is no need to go back 100 years. One need only look at 2004 when the previous government enabled a certain number of traditional ways of doing things to change. We are committed as a government to maintaining rural delivery in Canada.

Hon. Robert Thibault (West Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Tories continue to abandon Canadians, particularly rural Canadians. Now they are abandoning postal services. They will no longer deliver mail to 53,000 rural families in this country. This means 53,000 cars driving 40 kilometres each to pick up the mail instead of a few cars delivering it to all. A made in Canada plan.

Will the government guarantee that all Canadians will continue to receive their mail and that all Canadians will be treated equally?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am in agreement with the last statement. We will treat all Canadians equally and we will ensure Canadians receive their mail delivery on time and as it should be done. That is our commitment and that is what we will be doing.

* * *

[Translation]

ATLANTIC CANADA OPPORTUNITIES AGENCY

Hon. Robert Thibault (West Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is incumbent upon the minister to tell us how he is going to do it.

[English]

How will he do this? He stood in the House not too long ago on a question from me on the Digby Wharf and accused me of not doing anything over a 13 year period. I have been here for five years. When the decision was made on the Digby Wharf it was a Conservative who sat in the seat for West Nova. He and the minister for ACOA use their ministerial responsibilities for political purposes. He has indicated that he will make that decision on a political basis. He owes it to the people of Digby to return that facility to their hands.

[Translation]

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to see all the effort that the hon. member has put into his question. It is too bad that he did not put as much effort and determination into solving the problem in his riding. The problem we have now with mail delivery has been apparent for several months. We are going to deal with it. Unfortunately, it must be said that they did nothing—especially this member—for the people of Digby.

* * *

NATIONAL REVENUE

Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Quebec made a decision in the Norbourg case to help investors. It decided not to claim Vincent Lacroix's unpaid income taxes so that the money could be distributed to the victims of the fraud.

Why is the Minister of National Revenue refusing to tell us whether her government will do the same?

[English]

Hon. Carol Skelton (Minister of National Revenue and Minister of Western Economic Diversification, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can assure my hon. colleague that my colleagues from Quebec have kept me very well informed on this case. Regrettably, I must say once again that due to the privacy provisions of the Income Tax Act I cannot comment on the case.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister is refusing to answer the question because she wants this session to end before giving a straight answer to the people who were defrauded in the Norbourg affair.

On behalf of those citizens, I ask her again to tell us why the federal government will not do as the Quebec government did to help the Norbourg victims. It is her duty to answer us and to tell us her government's position as soon as possible. Instead of hiding the answer, she must reply.

[English]

Hon. Carol Skelton (Minister of National Revenue and Minister of Western Economic Diversification, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, I would like to say that I am unable to comment due to the privacy provisions of the Income Tax Act. I understand that a creditors meeting has been called for July 6. Our position will be known then.

* * *

• (1455)

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Belinda Stronach (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, earlier today I met with Nazanin Afshin-Jam, the Canadian champion of the cause to prevent the execution of an 18-year-old girl in Iran.

Ms. Afshin-Jam has brought world attention to this case of a young woman sentenced to execution after being convicted of killing a man who attempted to rape her and her 16-year-old niece. She was 17 at the time. Recent information indicates that the sentence has been commuted and a new trial has been ordered.

Would the minister confirm that he has received assurances from the Iranian embassy of a new trial? Would he update the House on any other developments?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her question and her recent interest in this case.

Canada takes these matters very seriously, as we have previously with the case of Mr. Jahanbegloo. We have made representations to the government of Iran. We have tried on many occasions to engage them about human rights abuses and human rights allegations.

We will continue to do so. We will continue to engage our international partners to relay these very serious concerns. This is of course an ongoing situation given the difficulties that we are having with diplomacy in Iran today.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL AID

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government was one of the first countries to offer immediate emergency funding to the victims of the earthquake in Indonesia. The devastation in that country is profound and there is much work still to be done in rebuilding.

After further examination of the needs of the Indonesians, would the Minister of International Cooperation update the House of additional funding that might be needed?

[Translation]

Hon. Josée Verner (Minister of International Cooperation and Minister for la Francophonie and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to say that our government was one of the first to respond to the urgent need of the affected population. Today I am announcing that in addition to the \$2 million we have already given, our government will give another \$4 million in humanitarian aid and to help rebuild and redevelop the country affected by this disaster.

* * *

[English]

HEALTH

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government in Nova Scotia seems more committed to building and renovating liquor stores than providing desperately needed nursing home beds.

Nova Scotia Conservatives have cut long term care beds, but had no problem finding money to build and renovate 23 liquor stores. There are too few long term beds. Many seniors are stuck in acute care beds. This makes health care waiting lists longer.

Will the federal Conservative government commit today to long term funding for long term care, so that seniors can have access to the quality care they need and deserve?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can tell the House that in budget 2006 we have been very supportive of the 10 year deal on health care, which includes transfer funding at an unprecedented level for the provinces and territories to meet the health care needs of their patients and constituents.

That includes long term care and home care. If the hon. member feels that strongly about it, perhaps she should run in the provincial election in Nova Scotia.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is not 10 years from now that they need the beds. It is now.

To compound our seniors' health problems, the federal government has now backed away from its commitment to reduce pollution. Thanks to the Prime Minister, the Nova Scotia premier now says that he will not meet his commitments to reduce pollution. That is the Conservative legacy. No help for our seniors for long term care and no clean air for them or their grandchildren to breathe.

Will the Prime Minister finally introduce a detailed plan to clean our air and water so that Nova Scotians, indeed all Canadians, can breathe a little easier?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the House will recognize that these questions from the hon. member for Halifax are little more than her attempt to engage in the provincial election campaign in Nova Scotia. The NDP may need that kind of help, but I am sure the Conservative Party of Nova Scotia is able to stand on its own feet.

* * *

MARRIAGE

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has said that he intends to introduce a motion to revisit the same sex marriage law even though nine jurisdictions and the Supreme Court of Canada have unanimously affirmed its validity, and even though the House has adopted legislation protecting both equality rights and religious freedom.

Since the only way that the law can be changed is to invoke the notwithstanding clause, and since the Prime Minister said he will not invoke the notwithstanding clause, my question is this. Why introduce such a divisive, unconstitutional non-starter while we have so many compelling concerns on the parliamentary and public agenda?

• (1500)

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister indicated during the election campaign that there would be a free vote with respect to this matter. There will in fact be a free vote on this matter. The Prime Minister is a man of his word.

* * *

ATLANTIC CANADA OPPORTUNITIES AGENCY

Mr. Fabian Manning (Avalon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member for Kings—Hants and Liberal leadership candidate has said, “I believe we need to replace failed regional economic development programs”. Almost 20 years ago a Conservative government created ACOA as a means to increase economic development and employment opportunities in Atlantic Canada.

Can the minister refute the statement that ACOA has been a failed economic development program in Atlantic Canada and tell us how it is meeting its mandate of increasing opportunities and employment for Atlantic Canadians?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his hard work and his question on this issue. I do not think it would surprise anyone that I disagree with the member for Kings—Hants.

ACOA's results speak for themselves: \$300 million in world class R and D carried out by Atlantic Canadian companies; exports now creating one out of every three jobs in the region; women in Atlantic Canada have started businesses at three times the rate of men; and the region's unemployment rate continues to fall to the lowest level since 1976.

Points of order

That is why our Prime Minister recently announced a \$10 million agreement with the Atlantic provinces to help our small and medium sized businesses. ACOA delivers results. It is here to stay. It is here to pay.

The government will continue to work with all Canadians and with young people to ensure that Atlantic Canadians can stay home.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I wish to draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of the Right Hon. John Prescott, MP, Deputy Prime Minister and First Secretary of State of the United Kingdom.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: The hon. member for Mount Royal is rising on a point of order.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member for Yorkton—Melville reported to the House on June 1:

We have heard from the Auditor General and senior bureaucrats that the Liberals deliberately hid millions of dollars from Parliament.

The transcript of testimony by the Auditor General and senior officials before the public safety committee contains no such allegation. On the contrary, the witnesses specifically repudiate that allegation.

The hon. member's statement, as it stands, misrepresents the testimony of witnesses and misleads the House. I have discussed the matter with the hon. member and would invite him to clarify for the record this matter before the House.

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am quite surprised that the Liberals would draw attention to probably one of the biggest fiascos that has ever been perpetrated on Parliament and the Canadian people. This is what the Auditor General said:

—significant costs incurred by the Canada Firearms Centre in 2003-04 were not reported properly to Parliament—

She also said:

—it also decided not to seek additional funding through Supplementary Estimates in 2003-04.

In light of what the Auditor General said, I am not misleading Parliament. Let me give the House a couple of other quotations from the Auditor General's comments:

What's really inexcusable is that Parliament was in the dark.

She said:

This information was not systematically provided to Parliament.

Again, she went on to say:

—it also decided not to seek additional funding through Supplementary Estimates in 2003-04.

Government Orders

That was a decision by the Liberal government to do that, to not inform Parliament. I will ask the people of Canada to decide whether that is deliberate or not, when we make a conscious decision. She went on to say:

The ability of the House of Commons to cap government spending is fundamental to Parliament's control of the public purse. This means that departments and agencies need to give Parliament good estimates of their spending plans and report their actual spending properly.

She also went on to say:

Senior accounting officials of the Treasury Board Secretariat have told us that a department and its minister are responsible for the accuracy of their financial reporting.

Her entire report goes on to document the problem. I would like to refer the Speaker to a ruling from May 31, 1982 on page 17912 of the Debates. It stated:

Expressions which are unparliamentary when applied to individuals are not always so considered when applied to a whole party.

Another ruling from May 1, 1980 at page 606 of the Debates said a similar thing, but in that case the words were directed at the government instead of an individual member.

I would like to point out that the Auditor General basically said the same things. Her report has been tabled and is before the House and I quoted from it. How can that be unparliamentary?

Further, I would like the Speaker to be aware that the member will be proposing a motion to replace me as chairman of the Standing Committee on Public Safety because of something I said in the House. That is intimidation and a breach of my privileges. Marleau and Montpetit states:

By far, the most important right accorded to Members of the House is the exercise of freedom of speech in parliamentary proceedings. It has been described as: "...a fundamental right without which they would be hampered in the performance of their duties. It permits them to speak in the House without inhibition, to refer to any matter or express any opinion as they see fit, to say what they feel needs to be said in the furtherance of the national interest and the aspirations of their constituents".

On page 84 of Marleau and Montpetit it states:

Speakers have consistently upheld the right of the House to the services of its Members free from intimidation—

The precedent cited on that same page is from Speaker Lamoureux who went further and suggested that members should be protected from threats or attempts at intimidation.

I believe the Liberal Party is now resorting to intimidation against members for what they say on the floor of the House. That affects our privileges and I think it is quite clear I did not mislead Parliament.

● (1505)

Hon. Irwin Cotler: Mr. Speaker, the only issue with respect to my point of order was whether the hon. misrepresented the testimony of the Auditor General. The one word he used, which I stated deliberately misrepresented the testimony of the Auditor General, as can be seen from a reading of the transcript, was when the hon. member for Yorkton—Melville characterized the Auditor General as saying that the Liberals deliberately hid millions of dollars from Parliament.

I put that question personally to the Auditor General. I asked her if she made that statement or if she would make the statement "the Liberals deliberately hid". Her answer was categorically "no".

That is what I am asking the hon. member to withdraw. He is misrepresenting the testimony of the Auditor General before the House. I have invited him to withdraw that statement.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Mount Royal and the hon. member for Yorkton—Melville for their submissions. My recollection is we had dealt with this matter once before.

I will take the matter under advisement and get back to the House in due course with a ruling on the issue raised by the hon. member for Mount Royal.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

● (1510)

[English]

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2006

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: When the matter was before the House before question period, the hon. member for Guelph had the floor. There are four minutes remaining in the time allotted for questions and comments on her speech. I therefore call for questions or comments.

[Translation]

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr (Jeanne-Le Ber, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member who spoke earlier referred to the child care provisions of this budget.

One thing concerns me a great deal. When the Liberal Party was in power, it never did anything to correct the fiscal imbalance caused by the fact that Quebec had set up its own child care system. Because Quebecers subsidized child care through their taxes, they paid a lower fee per day. When the time came to file their tax returns, they claimed a lower tax credit than other Canadians, which allowed the government to save \$250 million a year or \$1.5 billion over six years, at the expense of parents in Quebec who made that choice.

My question is this: does my colleague believe that, at the time, her government should have paid back the money it saved to the Government of Quebec, and does she think that the Conservative government should, at the very least, pay the money back today?

[English]

Hon. Brenda Chamberlain (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know the hon. member means well, but I took part in the debate on the budget. I heard so many Bloc members talk about the fact that they did not agree with the Conservative budget. They did not agree with the child care part. They did not agree with the Kyoto part. They did not agree with the taxation part. They did not agree with the Kelowna part. They went on and on, not agreeing with it.

Government Orders

I question why the Bloc supports the budget. The only thing the Bloc is interested in is the fiscal part. The Conservatives dangled that carrot, the fiscal part of this, but did not say what they would do for Quebec. They have not shown that and they are hoping to get more votes in Quebec. It is the only reason that was ever offered. The Bloc is foolish to think there is something in reality coming.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one point in the throne speech had to do with the guarantee of wait times for health care. The member probably is aware that there is no new money in the budget for this new initiative, where Canadians will be ferried to another province or into the United States. The Minister of Health also said on the public record in question period that the moneys needed to take care of that were in the \$42 billion health care accord, and that bothers me.

How can the Conservatives promise to do something that was done in the accord, which was not theirs in the first place, or have they misled the House?

Hon. Brenda Chamberlain: Mr. Speaker, as everyone in the House knows, I have worked on health care day after day. The last Liberal government, as a number of members have mentioned, left the House and our country in fantastic financial condition. The Conservative government does not have anything more allotted to wait times. Nor does it not have a clear plan.

When the Liberal government was in power, it established last Christmas actual wait times province to province. We have not moved one inch. I met a man on the weekend who has a hernia, the size of which I have never seen anything like. It is almost the size of a huge head on the front of him. He has to wait until July to get help.

The Conservative government has not allotted one thing and it has not moved one inch since Christmastime. This was a major plank it promised people. When people say that the Prime Minister is doing what he said he would do, he is not. He is failing Canadians. This is not a partisan issue. This is about the health of Canadians and he should act.

• (1515)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr (Jeanne-Le Ber, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I wanted to speak about the budget again. Although it was passed unanimously this morning, I think it has some deficiencies.

We in the Bloc Québécois voted for the budget because it contains a promise to correct the fiscal imbalance. That is the only reason we voted for it, because we have numerous concerns about it.

We have serious concerns and strong reservations about the correction of the fiscal imbalance. Days and weeks have gone by since the government introduced this budget. We are starting to see some backtracking. The promise is no longer as firm as it was. We have seen the minister backtrack. We have also seen the Prime Minister backtrack in public.

We are also concerned about the weak surpluses set out in the budget. We are wondering where the money to correct the fiscal imbalance is going to come from. That is what we are talking about, that is what the Conservative government promised: to correct the fiscal imbalance. That means \$10 billion to \$12 billion a year,

approximately \$3 billion of it for Quebec. We are wondering where the money will come from.

Equalization is another thing that concerns us a lot. We see that to please the oil-rich provinces the Conservative government plans to exclude—we do not yet know whether this will be in whole or in part—non-renewable resources from the equalization calculation. What does that do? It is not abstract. It represents hundreds of millions of dollars for Quebec and the other provinces. The provinces that are rich in natural resources appear, for the purposes of calculating equalization, to be less rich. This means that they are less able to contribute to the redistribution of money to the provinces that need it most.

What is a shame is that it is being done for non-renewable resources, which often produce pollution, but it is not being done for renewable resources. For example, why would the federal government not exclude from the calculation of equalization all revenue derived from hydroelectricity in Quebec? And yet this resource has the advantage of being renewable and non-polluting.

What is going on? Between 1970 and 1999, the government invested \$66 billion in the development of oil and non-renewable energy sources. During the same period, a meagre \$329 million was invested in renewable sources of energy. Of course Quebeckers had to pay a quarter of the \$66 billion to develop the energy and the economy of other provinces. Today, now that it has become profitable, when the time comes to distribute the wealth, the Conservative government says, no, thank you. When it is time to pay, we are asked to contribute, but when it is time to collect, we are told we can do without.

In any case, the real solution to the fiscal imbalance does not rest solely in equalization and transfers to the provinces, but basically in real transfers of tax fields to the governments of Quebec and the provinces. That is the solution. Quebec should be able to benefit from the foreseeable revenue it controls. This way, we would not always be at the mercy of a new government that might play the 1995 trick on us again. We should not have to lose everything we have gained because the government has decided to backtrack.

We will be very vigilant with the Conservative government to make sure that the solution provides for a transfer of tax fields. Whether this is short-term or medium-term, it has to be done. It is not true that the government should give out a few treats, call an election and then try to take the treats back if it unfortunately wins a majority vote.

Something else in this budget is disappointing. During the election campaign, this government promised to take a new attitude towards Quebec and to respect its areas of jurisdiction. Unfortunately, we see the good old federalist habits making their way back in a hurry.

We got the universal child care benefit program, when child care falls within Quebec's jurisdiction. We have suggested a solution that would avoid this problem, but the government is obstinately refusing to give in.

There was the government's intention, for the *n*th time, to create a Canadian securities body, when this is in Quebec's exclusive area of jurisdiction. All Quebec governments have always been opposed to any interference in this area.

Government Orders

●(1520)

The government still wants to proceed. Even in the budget addenda on the fiscal imbalance, there was frequent reference to accountability and pan-Canadian standards. They said they wanted to adopt the model of the social union, even though Quebec has rejected that principle. It is obvious that the attitude of the federal government is always the same. Canada Foundation for Innovation, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council: all instances of interference in Quebec's fields of jurisdiction. The Canadian Strategy for Cancer Control duplicates what is already being done in Quebec.

In immigration, the recognition of immigrants' professional credentials is a very good thing, but once again, this is something that is decided in Quebec and the provinces. It would be better to give provinces the money so that they can exercise their own jurisdictions.

In immigration, however, there is one responsibility that falls to the federal government which it continues to refuse to act upon, and that is the establishment of the appeal division for refugees. About \$10 million would be sufficient to permit refugees who are not satisfied with the decision of a board member to appeal that decision and be allowed real justice.

In my riding, there is a very concrete example of this. Mr. Abdelkader Belaouni is presently in the basement of a church rectory because he does not want to be deported. He firmly believes he has been the victim of an injustice. He has never been able to appeal the decision of board member Laurier Thibault, who in the last two years has allowed only a single refugee claim. That means a refusal rate of close to 100%. So you see what is happening in this area.

We could talk at length about the process for appointing board members, but that is not a matter that relates to the budget. However, since board members are not always appointed on the basis of competency and knowledge of the field, sometimes there are bad decisions.

In our legal system, when an authority renders a bad decision, that decision can be appealed. That is provided for by law. However, since the government has refused to provide money in this budget for the refugee appeal division, that division has still not been set up, and people like Abdelkader Belaouni find themselves in extremely difficult situations. Therefore the government must create this appeal division and allocate it the necessary funds. In the meantime, because there are human tragedies going on, the government must regularize the situation of Mr. Belaouni and all those who are experiencing difficulties in Canada.

I would also like to speak about the universal child care benefit. There has been a good deal of discussion about this, and I must say that it is a subject with which I am particularly concerned, as I plan to have children myself in a few years. I asked a lot of questions in committee, but did not receive all the answers I wanted. I find that a little unfortunate.

First of all, in its present form, this program constitutes interference in Quebec's fields of jurisdiction because it is a social and family measure. Second, the way that this program was designed is unfair. The benefit itself is taxable only on the lowest family

income. That creates some absurd situations. For example, consider two families. In the first family, where there are two parents, one parent earns \$213,500 per year. This example might very well apply to a federal minister. The other parent stays at home. What do we find? The entire benefit will be reported on the tax return of the person with the lowest income—i.e. \$0—who, for all practical purposes, would pay no income tax.

●(1525)

However, in the case of a single parent family with an income of \$28,000, since the benefit is related to the income, there will be an additional \$800 in combined federal and provincial taxes. Obviously, things are upside down. The families with the greatest need for help from the government will get the least and the reverse.

And yet we made a proposal in good faith to the government, which said it wanted to consult the opposition parties. The proposal was to provide a refundable tax credit to all parents. It could be sent monthly by cheque—with a Canadian flag on it if that pleased the federal government. That is not a problem. However, our proposal involved using the family income as a basis to avoid the absurdities I described earlier. This benefit would have been reduced as a function of the family income, starting with the full allowance of \$1,200 per child for families with an income of \$25,000, for example, to a universal floor of \$700. The proposal cost the same. It respected provincial jurisdictions. It was fairer and truly met people's needs.

I asked questions in the Standing Committee on Finance. Everyone who came to testify supported the Bloc's proposal and said it was better. I heard no member of the Conservative Party say our proposal was not a good one or that theirs was better for whatever reason. We still have no explanation why our proposal was rejected. It is too bad.

As regards the matter of child care services, there has been a lot of talk of parental choice. However, the Conservative government still refuses to accept and recognize the choice made by Quebecers. They chose to set up a universal day care service and to pay for it through their taxes for the welfare of our children and future generations. It means the federal government saves \$250 million annually in taxes at the expense of Quebec parents. Over the past six years, it has meant a total of \$1.5 billion.

How this works is quite simple. All Canadian taxpayers complete their income tax returns. On line 214, there is a credit for child care. Parents in Quebec enter \$7 a day on this line, instead of the \$25, \$30, or \$50 they would have to enter if they had not chosen this form of child care. This means, of course, that Quebecers receive a smaller tax credit than people elsewhere in Canada. Yet, they have paid for their child care service through their provincial taxes.

In a true federation that operates as it should, the central government would respect the choices of Quebecers and return to the Quebec government the money it saves, rather than saying, as in this case, "Too bad, you made your choice. We will invest the \$250 million in the Treasury Board coffers and do what we like with it". Such as giving gifts to Alberta oil companies.

Government Orders

This situation has been a reality for Quebeckers for years. This is one of many examples of what it is costing us to not have full control of our destiny, not being a nation, not having our own country.

The Bloc Québécois, of course, is working hard for Quebec sovereignty, but in the meantime, we would really like the federal government to recognize the choices made by Quebeckers and to transfer this \$250 million a year to Quebec.

Another program that is very important to us is the POWA, or program for older worker adjustment. The Bloc Québécois presented a sub-amendment to the Speech from the Throne for the government to implement this program. The sub-amendment was unanimously adopted and the federal Conservative government promised to implement it.

• (1530)

We still have not seen that program put into effect.

So what does it involve? It is for older workers who have been the victims of mass layoffs, to provide them with financial support until such time as they reach retirement age, so that they can reap the full benefits of their retirement.

The Conservative government has often replied that there were labour force re-entry programs. We have seen, however, that there are limits to what those programs can do. It is very difficult to re-enter the labour force when you have worked for a company for 30 or 40 years, often in a one-industry town, where there are really no other businesses. This is particularly true given that companies often prefer to hire young people rather than people who will be having to retire in a few years.

We therefore have a situation in which often both partners in a couple work in the same company. They have worked all their lives, they lose their jobs, they are not able to find other jobs, and they are not entitled to employment insurance for long enough. Once their employment insurance is exhausted, in order to receive social assistance in Quebec, they have to sell everything, lose everything they have spent their lives building.

I submit to the House that this is a very sad end to a working life and that we are wrong to abandon these people, who have contributed to society all their lives, particularly when this program would cost a maximum of a few hundred millions. It existed in the past; it was the Liberals who abolished it. So I implore the Conservative government to act as quickly as possible.

The final point I would like to talk about is one that is also of great importance to me, as a young person perhaps, because people talk to me about it a lot since I am the youth critic for the Bloc Québécois. I am talking about the environment, and in particular the Kyoto protocol, which the Conservative government has quite simply dumped. And what did this government say to justify its actions? It said that it was not capable of achieving its objectives.

Let's get something clear. We have a government that uses its own incompetence to justify its policy decisions. For years, we had the Liberals, who were in favour of the protocol, except that they did nothing to implement it. Now we have the Conservatives, who say they are incapable of implementing it. Ultimately, the only difference

is that the Conservatives know they are incompetent, while the Liberals were unaware of their own incompetence.

And yet large numbers of countries are succeeding in doing it everywhere in the world. England is even making money by implementing the Kyoto protocol.

If we had a good, responsible, competent government, we would be capable of doing it, but the Minister of Oil—of the Environment—simply has no plan; she is much too busy with other things. That is a good one, “the Minister of Oil”, that is; in the end, I am not offended. So the Minister of the Environment has no plan. In any event, she could very well put together a Canadian plan that would comply with the Kyoto protocol. The Kyoto protocol, after all, is first and foremost a set of commitments made to the international community.

I believe we have a moral obligation to achieve the Kyoto protocol objectives. We have to succeed at this. We have to do it for future generations, for our economy and for our environment. Failure in this is unacceptable; we have to get it done.

I invite all members of the public to support the Bloc Québécois and the parties that genuinely support the Kyoto protocol. In Quebec, the Save Kyoto coalition has been formed. I invite people to visit their website, to sign the petition, to wear the little pin in the shape of a green K—for Kyoto—to say that they find it unacceptable for this government to renege on international promises, on Canada's international commitments, and sacrifice our environment to please a few oil companies that for decades have been shamelessly filling their pockets at the expense of Quebeckers.

• (1535)

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I remember when I was a relatively new member and gave speeches like that. I think it is time to pass on a little wisdom about what works.

The member started off by talking about the two classics, fiscal imbalance and equalization. These are very problematic. They have been topics of discussion in this place for a long time.

With regard to the fiscal imbalance, the member is probably aware that the Prime Minister is basically saying that we have vacated tax room by reducing the GST, so if Quebec would increase its provincial sales tax, there would be more money. That is the solution. The member will understand that is not going to make very many people happy.

Equalization also is something very important to Quebec. I wish the member would have looked at the implications of the report that just came out, which suggested not whether resource revenue be in or out, but basically said that half of it should be in. In other words, let us make absolutely everybody unhappy. This is very important. These are critical issues.

Government Orders

I know how the member feels about Canada and Quebec's role in Canada. As long as Quebec is part of Canada, we have to look at these issues from the standpoint of how we move these things forward in a way which respects the Constitution as well as the best interests of all Canadians regardless of what province they happen to live in.

I would offer one little thought with regard to Kyoto. He may not be aware, but not only did the last government have the EnerGuide program to assist low income households to improve the energy efficiency of homes, but there was the one tonne challenge as well. Also, a significant deal was signed with the automobile sector. That sector agreed unanimously to meet its Kyoto targets within the timeframe. That has never been mentioned in the debate on Kyoto. It is respectful that the automobile industry has made a commitment to be there.

The ones that have not made it, and maybe the member would like to comment, are the large emitters. The member will know that the petroleum industry and hydro are the most significant contributors to greenhouse gas emissions. Quebec is not disassociated from hydro. Quebec also has to be part of the solution. Maybe the member has some comments.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr: Mr. Speaker, equalization is one part of the solution to fiscal imbalance. What is most important is that there be true transfers of the federal government's tax fields to the provinces and Quebec. There is strong consensus in Quebec on this matter. The Séguin commission looked at this issue and issued its report. The majority of Quebecers agree that there is a fiscal imbalance and that it must be corrected through transfer of tax fields.

We should take note of the concept: the fiscal imbalance must be resolved by a transfer of tax fields. The two are tied. The fiscal imbalance cannot be resolved simply through an equalization formula that is constantly changing. This does not allow Quebec to truly have choices and to make decisions for the long term because it never knows when the federal government will change the equalization formula to suit one person or another.

With regard to excluding natural resources, it is obvious that they should never be excluded from the equalization formula. Whether we are talking about 50% or 100%, it is unacceptable to exclude resources. Why would we choose to favour, in a purely arbitrary way, one province over another? Why not exclude renewable resources, such as those produced by Hydro-Québec? This would be advantageous for Quebec. Why not exclude revenues from the aeronautical industry? That would also benefit Quebec.

As we can see, it is completely arbitrary. Once again, it caters to the western oil companies and that is unfortunate.

With regard to the Kyoto protocol, I must say that the government was somewhat disappointing. The Liberal government never wanted to put in place the territorial approach or respect the efforts made by Quebec. With regard to major emitters, the targets were not high enough. It was not surprising that—

●(1540)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but we must continue with questions and comments.

The hon. member for Vancouver Island North.

[*English*]

Ms. Catherine Bell (Vancouver Island North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week we heard about the deplorable conditions on the Kashechewan First Nation reserve, but let me tell the House that there are problems on many reserves across this country, including in Vancouver Island North.

The Homalco First Nation in Campbell River is in serious need of adequate housing. There is overcrowding which leads to health and social issues that need not be.

At Simoom Sound on Gilford Island, the water is contaminated and what little housing is there is uninhabitable due to moulds.

At Kingcome Inlet, there is no road for a six kilometre stretch, which leaves this community more isolated than it already is. I would like to read an excerpt from a very short letter that an 11-year-old girl in grade six wrote to me. Her name is Samantha-Ann Tania Moon. She says:

My family's been living in Kingcome for a long time. I think they have been here forever.

We need a road because some of my family has died in our river. We need a road because my Uncle Frank and my Uncle Ernie died in the river. My Auntie Helen's brother died in the river too. Also my friend, cousin and uncle were in a boat accident.

Please, we need a road or more of us might die. Also, one of us might get sick and we have to wait for high tide and we have to wait for a boat to take us down the river to catch a plane for the hospital.

Perhaps the member could comment on this and on where the money is for infrastructure for first nations, for roads, for houses and for clean water.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased finally to have had a question. Indeed, there is money missing in this budget for aboriginal communities, among others. The Bloc Québécois has already said it would support the Kelowna accord and we continue to work to defend the people of aboriginal communities.

Again, even though this transition budget was passed unanimously this morning, it is far from perfect and we will monitor the government to make sure we have a better budget next year.

[*English*]

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was not aware that the Bloc Québécois actually supported the Kelowna accord, because Quebec first nations did not take part in the discussions and their government also did not attend, so I find that interesting.

Government Orders

My question comes back to the whole issue of equalization and the member's indication that he believes that any exception of natural resources would be made as a compensation to the oil companies. I want to remind the member that equalization is a federal tax program. It is federal tax dollars. It has nothing to do with oil companies whatsoever. It is a matter of equalizing tax dollars and equalizing program spending and so forth for all the provinces so that all Canadians can expect reasonably the same level of services from their government.

Equalization really does not have any impact whatsoever on oil companies or business. It is a federal tax program. I would like to ask the member if he is aware of that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr: Mr. Speaker, the question could have been directed to the premier of Alberta since he seems very concerned about excluding natural resource revenues from the equalization calculation. It is not complicated. As soon as non-renewable resources—such as gas or oil—are excluded, then resource-rich provinces have an advantage in terms of equalization and they will contribute less to the system. At the end of the day, this money is not a federal gift. It comes from taxpayers across Canada, including Quebec.

Furthermore, as far as the Kelowna accord is concerned, I must say I am very proud of what was done in Quebec. The Parti Québécois government negotiated the peace of the braves with the aboriginal communities in Quebec. I think this example was cited the world over. The day we become a sovereign nation, I am certain we will still have exemplary relations with aboriginal nations.

• (1545)

[*English*]

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Acadie—Bathurst.

It gives me great pleasure to rise this afternoon to speak one last time to Bill C-13, the Budget Implementation Act. It was interesting to listen to some of the Bloc members suggest that this bill is now supported by everyone in the House and that the budget has been approved by all parties. I think they doth protest a little too much. Perhaps they were looking for an opportunity to reverse their support of the Conservative government and that opportunity did not happen and they are disappointed.

I am here to say that the New Democratic Party stands opposed to this bill. We were opposed at the beginning. We were opposed at second reading. We were opposed at committee. We are opposed today. We are opposed for very good reasons. The Bloc members are foaming at the mouth in the hope they could join us because they are embarrassed by their position of support for the Conservatives and the budget.

Let us acknowledge what happened today. There was some procedural confusion and as a result, this afternoon we are having a debate on Bill C-13, in another form perhaps than is normally the case, but certainly it is a debate where every one of us can put on the record our party's position with respect to the bill.

We were opposed from day one for the very reasons that the Bloc opposed the Liberal budget last year. There was a lack of reference to

housing, a lack of reference to aboriginal Canadians, a lack of reference to health care, a lack of reference to child care, and a lack of emphasis on urban transportation. These are all issues that Canadians raise with us day in and day out, which the Bloc last budget year when we were dealing with a Liberal minority government thought could just be put aside, that those issues did not matter and the budget could pass without any such reference.

Those members across the way were very disappointed when the NDP actually managed to get something in the Liberal budget for Canadians. Much to the dismay and disdain of those members, we actually managed to achieve \$4.6 billion for Canadians. We actually managed to get money for housing, money for education, money for aboriginal Canadians, money for urban transit, money for the environment, and money for international development.

Those members of the Bloc could not bring themselves to support us in that initiative. Yet interestingly, when it came time for them to justify their support for the Conservatives, what did they point to? They pointed to every element in the present budget pertaining to the NDP better balanced budget, Bill C-48. They pointed to the money referenced in this package for housing, for education, for aboriginal Canadians and for urban transit. All the items that they are now bragging about were a result of the NDP balanced budget a year ago when we were dealing with the Liberal government.

Those Bloc members are so confused they do not know what end is up. They have put themselves in the very embarrassing position of not standing up for the working people, for ordinary families in this country, including those in their own province of Quebec. They have bowed to pressure from the Conservatives because of a political agenda and have succumbed to a government's agenda that in no way represents working people and working families.

One cannot stand in the House today and say that this budget is good for working families. This budget helps big business and big corporations. It is a very good budget for wealthy Canadians and large corporations, but there is nothing for ordinary families. Under this budget child care wait lists will go up, family allowance will be diminished, pollution will go up and student debt will go up.

The Bloc can support this? The Conservatives can present this kind of budget? This budget in no way reflects the realities of working people and the kinds of difficulties they face on a day to day basis.

• (1550)

Let me give members opposite 10 reasons why we oppose this budget. Let me start first of all with the fact that it is a budget for business, not a budget for working families. The minister himself said so. He said he listened to business. There is a *National Post* article dated May 26 saying the Minister of Finance “delivered in budget. Listened to business”. He admits that he sought out the wisdom of business to make this budget business friendly.

He did not say he spoke to working people. He did not say he spoke to ordinary Canadians across this country because he cared about what they had to say and he wanted to make sure this budget was balanced. No, he did not. As a result, we are dealing with a budget that is flawed and that does not address ordinary families by any stretch of the imagination.

Government Orders

He gives huge corporate tax breaks of \$7 billion. The Bloc and the Conservatives together, I might note, gave \$7 billion in corporate tax breaks at a time when corporate profits are now running at 14.6% of GDP, the highest level on record. Profits rose 16.4% in the last quarter of 2005, 13% higher than during the same period a year earlier.

Corporate Canada is sitting on so much cash right now that even its own analysts are concerned. One banker admits that at least \$80 billion in excess liquidity is sitting out there and that this figure is likely to rise by another 11% this year. We can go on with the statistics, but let me say that is the number one reason why we oppose this budget. It caters to big business. It ignores ordinary families.

The second reason is that it does not help small business. If the government is so concerned about small and medium sized businesses, the mom and pop shops and the small entrepreneurs, those who are really the backbone of this country, this budget does not do it. It does not give them any special supports.

When it comes to the one tax provision that the Conservatives say is progressive, which of course we dispute, the reduction of the GST by 1%, they refuse to give a penny of assistance to small businesses that are having one heck of a time trying to adapt all of their systems in order to accomplish this reduction in the GST. We asked the Minister of Finance point blank in committee on May 30. He absolutely refused to do one thing to help small business and would not even provide some support program or some assistance to help them deal with the fact that this is a big deal when it comes to businesses that are very small and have few employees.

The third reason we do not support this budget is that it does not at all address working families. I have hinted at this by mentioning its bias in terms of the corporate tax giveaways, but let us be clear that when it comes to ordinary working families, the burden of paying for government and all the supports we need has shifted onto the shoulders of ordinary families, with a much greater percentage of revenue coming from income taxes from individuals, not corporations.

I thought this country was about balance. I thought we were interested in ensuring that everyone plays a part, that individuals are not singled out and that big business pays its share. Why, then, does the government continue to favour big business when ordinary Canadians are suffering?

Why does it not look at the huge blows being taken by our manufacturing sector, especially because of the high dollar, the loss of jobs, the high unemployment rate among young people, the way in which women are trying to juggle working family responsibilities, and the way in which so many working people are holding down three and four jobs just to make ends meet?

Is it not time that those Canadians got a raise? Is it not time that those Canadians got a share of the pie at a time when we have this huge fiscal dividend of something like \$83 billion over the next five years? Yet the government could not find it within itself to put some money toward programs that actually make a difference to ordinary families, programs in the areas of education, training, child care, housing, the environment and aboriginal concerns. That is where we

must start for a truly meaningful budget that meets the realities of Canadians.

The fifth reason we do not support the budget is that there is absolutely no focus on the future of this country in terms of equalization. There is no plan today to address the O'Brien report that came out yesterday in terms of defending and supporting a program that is meant to equalize conditions among all Canadians and regions.

There is nothing on housing, except, of course, for the NDP money that we fought for last time.

There is nothing to help aboriginal concerns in terms of on reserve housing, which we have just heard about from my colleague from Vancouver Island North. There is nothing in terms of urban aboriginal housing. In fact, there is nothing that really gets at the very root causes of serious problems in our communities today.

● (1555)

On the environment, what does the government do, besides all the mess around Kyoto? Nothing. There is nothing in terms of the EnerGuide program.

Let me finish by saying that there is nothing in terms of child care. There is nothing in terms of health care. The issues that matter to Canadians are not addressed by the government and it is high time they were. We will continue to fight with everything we have to make minority Parliament work.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): Questions and comments. The hon. member for Tobique—Mactaquac.

Mr. Mike Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciated the hon. member's comments and would like to pick up on the last part of her speech, in which she talked about the environment. Certainly over the last number of years we have seen our emissions go up by 35%. Canada went into Kyoto without a plan, and every time we go into one of these things without a plan, things happen. We have not had integration between our energy policy and our environment policy, which is something we need to work toward. We heard in our natural resources committee this morning that the only way we could meet Kyoto would be to buy our way there.

Does the member not think that it is better to spend money on programs and technology right here in Canada, such as agriculture and alternative fuels? Does she not think that EnerGuide needs to be reviewed? Does she not think that any program where 50% of the money spent does not go to the end user should be looked at?

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: Mr. Speaker, this is a very important question, because the environment and climate change are top of mind for most Canadians and of course they are very much under debate in the House today.

Obviously we were very concerned about the Liberals' approach to climate change when they were in government. We criticized them constantly for having no targets and no timetable and for in fact playing games with the numbers around credits and not putting a serious plan on the table. There was no plan under the Liberals.

Government Orders

That does not make it any more palatable for us to support a government that has no plan, no target, no timetable and no commitment to the climate change issue itself. The government does not have an understanding of greenhouse gas emissions. It has no ability to in fact realize that we are dealing with the health and survival of our planet. We have a Minister of the Environment who is prepared to throw Kyoto out the window and come up with some other alternative program that is not being funded by other partners in that scenario, such as the United States, as we heard today in question period.

Let me suggest to the member that the EnerGuide program was one of those examples of a program that was cost effective, modest and doing something very effective.

I will conclude by simply reading a very short statement from a constituent of mine, Dale Klassen, who said:

My question is why there would be a time limit for this program? Energy efficiency is just as valuable now as it would have been within the 18 month limit, so why would the federal government take away this support from Canadians? I was not able to afford the upgrades that were recommended to me when I had the energy efficiency evaluation done, but have now insulated my basement and also wish to add attic insulation and some new windows.

My constituent cannot get any support.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): I apologize to the hon. member, but I do see other members who are interested in asking questions.

The hon. member for London—Fanshawe.

Mrs. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member about a portion of the budget bill that did not become apparent until it reached the finance committee.

The current system for mortgage insurance managed by CMHC allows families that cannot afford a down payment to secure money through CMHC. Likewise, community groups can access money that permits them to build and maintain supportive and special needs housing.

Would the hon. member comment on the Conservative plan to open up mortgage insurance to the private sector and jeopardize these families and community groups?

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: Mr. Speaker, that is a very important part of this budget package that has been largely invisible in the public domain. I am glad that the member for London—Fanshawe has raised this question, because in fact it is something the Conservative government has tried to slip through and it has slipped through. It is exactly the same agenda item of the Liberals. Every time we turn around, the Conservatives are there trying to act just like Liberals. On top of that, the Bloc so totally supported the Liberals and the Conservatives on this issue. They decided it was okay to open the door wide for competition, for other mortgage insurers, in regard to what is currently handled by CMHC.

We have nothing against competition. What we asked for was some controls to be put in place, some oversight body, something to ensure that in fact these mortgage insurers would not run in, take the cream of the crop and abandon communities that desperately need

the services of CMHC, not only in terms of mortgage insurance but in terms of the money that gets plowed back into the system.

Let me say that in fact we tried to amend this at committee. We had no support from the Bloc. We had one or two supporters from the Liberals and no support from the Conservatives. The government has now proceeded with an agenda that could be very hurtful to Canadians and our dream of having a national housing policy.

● (1600)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want first to thank the hon. member for Winnipeg North for her speech on the budget. This is only a discussion that will not lead to a vote this evening. We know all the confusion that reigned in the House of Commons this morning.

The Bloc wants to persuade anyone who will listen that the NDP unanimously supports the Conservative budget. As the New Democratic Party whip, I can assure you that it opposes the Conservative budget and Bill C-13.

As a result of this morning's confusion, there was no real vote. The bill was simply passed. But look at the past, at what has happened in the House of Commons with the budget implementation bill. Throughout the entire process, the Bloc Québécois has voted with the Conservatives. At the end of the Minister of Finance's budget speech, the leader of the Bloc Québécois left immediately in order to announce that his party would be in favour. We, for our part, voted against this bill at second reading as well as in committee, while the Bloc voted in favour.

They brag that the NDP will not be able to say a word against the Conservative budget any longer because it voted unanimously in favour. I can assure all Canadians that we opposed the Conservative budget, and still do, because it does not reflect the needs of Canadians.

In forming a minority government, the Conservatives would not have been able to get a budget passed like the one they tabled in the House of Commons without the support of the Bloc Québécois. The Bloc can do what it wants, and that is precisely what it did.

We were accused under the Liberal government of forgetting about the unemployed. I could say that that is what this budget does: it forgets about the unemployed. Under the Liberals, we managed to get Bill C-48, which made changes to the budget. We all know what these changes were: \$1.6 billion for housing, \$1.5 billion to reduce tuition expenses, \$900 million for public transit in order to help environmentally-friendly energy, \$800 million for transport, \$100 million for improvements, and \$500 million for foreign aid. In all, that was \$4.5 billion.

Even if the Bloc Québécois did not like the Liberals, at least it could have voted for something in keeping with its values. I have spoken with former Bloc members who were not re-elected. They told me that they would have liked to vote for that budget but were told to vote against it. That is their business. But the Bloc cannot say today that we voted with the Conservatives during the confusion in the House of Commons this morning, implying that we were in favour of the Conservative bill.

Government Orders

We must remember that the Conservatives slashed \$20 million from small craft harbours. Yesterday in the House of Commons, we debated a unanimous recommendation of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans that \$15 million should be added to the budgets for small craft harbours. The government, for its part, just announced that it has cut \$20 million from these budgets.

Furthermore, \$3.6 billion will not be spent on daycares in Canada, but the government will give 1,200 taxable dollars to people who have children under six. Some people, depending on their income, might get even less money than they would have otherwise. There was a plan in place, a plan to help Canadian daycares.

For students, the budget offers a whole lot of nothing. The chairperson of the Canadian Federation of Students said, and I quote, "Tinkering around the edges of the tax system is not going to increase access to college and university".

• (1605)

That is what George Soule, National Chairperson of the Canadian Federation of Students, said.

This government should be restoring the billions of dollars that were cut from post-secondary education transfers during the past decade so that tuition fees can be reduced.

That happened under the Liberals.

He continued:

For many students the changes will have no impact. A lot of students don't even earn enough taxable income to use all of their existing tax credits.

In this budget, the government decided to give tax credits. Students are usually at university, not at work. They do not earn a lot of money and tax credits will be of no use to them. Students are mostly young people, our children, who go to university and come out \$40,000 in debt. The previous government told students that they would not be the same as companies.

In this budget, the government will grant corporations a \$10 billion tax reduction over the next few years. Students are being told that they may not declare bankruptcy in the next ten years. That is how we are going to treat students, our children. Big corporations that are capable of paying their CEOs multi-million dollar salaries are going to get a \$10 billion tax reduction. And on the other hand, we are going to send students into debt. We are going to ensure that students have a difficult future. We are going to ensure that when students go to the bank to borrow, their credit will not be good. That means that they will not be able to have cars, and these young people just starting out in life will not be able to have homes.

I cannot count the students who come to our offices to see us and tell us these things! They can no longer even borrow, because they are incapable of repaying their debts. Their fathers and mothers know this. As my colleague, the Bloc Québécois member, said, the fathers know. That is true, but the child also knows, as does the young student. A young woman from Paquetville told me that she had gone to school, she had gone into debt, and she was now a young woman on the labour market who was unable to repay her debt, and so today she had debt recovery proceedings brought against her. She also said that she was unable to buy a new car, or even a car to get to work, she was unable to start out in life and buy a house, because governments have passed laws that have these young

people in a straightjacket. In 1994, the previous government made spending cuts that affected students. It is these young people, our children, who are paying the price.

The Conservatives' budget does not help students. The solution is not to cut income tax for students. What would help them is tuition fees. There is absolutely nothing for that.

Let us think about the Kyoto protocol. This country joined with the other countries of the world in Kyoto to ratify an agreement on the environment. It is a shame to see that we are going to back out of it.

There are "made in Canada" effects. In the Baie des Chaleurs, storms like we have never seen before take our docks and smash everything in their path. In Berestford, we had never seen a winter storm pile the ice up 70 feet. This was the year the Canada games were held in New Brunswick, in Bathurst and Campbellton. It virtually erected a monument. It was unbelievable!

For the government to withdraw from the Kyoto protocol and for there to be absolutely nothing in the budget to help the environment, this is totally unacceptable.

And yet this government is doing an about-face and, with no problem at all, giving big corporations \$10 billion. With another about-face, according to a pretty credible rumour, it is going to buy American planes for National Defence. And we are also going to have them repaired in the United States. I find myself wondering what kind of government is in power at present. I am glad that it has a minority and not a majority. Imagine, this government is bartering our country's jobs, when in some regions the unemployment rate is 20%.

• (1610)

There is nothing for official languages in this budget, and nothing for employment insurance. When we examine it closely, we find that there is nothing in it for ordinary people. We have to hope that Canadians will understand that this budget and this government are doing nothing for ordinary people, and that they will not support this government's budget.

[English]

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened quite intently to the member's speech. I think there were a couple of items where he was not quite accurate, certainly not the least of which are the investments we have made for low income Canadians, with 645,000 low income Canadians coming off the tax roll. That is working for people and responding to Canadian families.

The member also talked about post-secondary education and support for it. He talked about tax credits. It is of interest to me that students can now earn up to \$19,000 tax free. That is incentive for students to work. I had a couple of jobs, while I was at university, including while I was studying.

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However, the other part of post-secondary education is that it is not just academics. I am very proud of the measures we have put in place with respect to apprenticeships, encouraging employers to hire apprentices through support and then supporting apprentices through the program. That will train people to get a trade. It will get them out of low income jobs and into higher income jobs. I am very proud of it. I would like to hear the member's comments on that program.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Speaker, if the member is suggesting that he worked and made \$19,000 every summer, maybe that was in Alberta working for an oil company. I can promise him that I am right on when I say that the people working in the fish plant at \$7 an hour do not make \$19,000 in that number of weeks.

There is nothing in the budget for employment insurance to help working people who lose their jobs. There is nothing to help the people who go for training programs. If they work for a company, as mechanics or electricians for instance, and then get released to go for more learning, there is a one week waiting period for employment insurance. They lose wages for one week so they can learn, so they can keep their jobs and so they can better themselves. Instead the government takes the money from employment insurance, which is paid into by the workers, and puts it into its budget, balances its budget and has a zero deficit on the back of workers who lost their jobs.

There is nothing in the budget to help workers. That money belongs to them. The government is taking it away from them without asking them.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to make a couple of comments with regard to post-secondary as well.

When I talk to students, I often talk about the cost of an education. My conclusion to them is usually the first thing I tell them, and that is that they cannot afford not to go to post-secondary. The spread in the compensation of a high school grad compared to a college or a university grad is about 19% for the rest of their lives.

When they talk about students coming out with \$40,000 in debt, I understand some people do. However, I also know that 95% of students pay their loans off on time. I also know that most students are not even qualified to receive student loans because of their family incomes. I also know that if the children do not have taxable incomes, their parents get to claim education expenses and tuition to reduce their taxes. Are they making no contribution to this education? I also know the student is off for four months a year. Are they making no money whatsoever, even cutting lawns or whatever it is, to make a contribution?

I was there too. I used to run a computer at night to raise a few dollars for food. Sometimes we just have to put a little into it. It is not that there are absolutely no benefits on the gross amount of the expenses. The member should be straight with students and tell them that they cannot afford not to go to post-secondary.

● (1615)

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Speaker, I do not think I ever told a student not to go to university. They should go to university or college and get the education they need to work. What I am saying to the government is it is not here to put them into the debt, and that is happening. If cutting lawns makes \$19,000 in four months, I wish I had a job like that.

These students went into debt because of the Liberals. That is when student debt went up. It is a shame that the Conservative government has done nothing to correct it. The president of the Canadian Federation of Students condemned the government, not just the new government, but the government before.

Maybe members in the House of Commons have universities in their home towns. If students do not have universities in their home towns, if they have to pay for rent, food and everything else, their debt is \$40,000. It is \$10,000 a year, and I am sure of what I am saying.

Mr. Rick Dykstra (St. Catharines, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the 2006-07 federal budget. I thought I would be speaking to it at third reading, but I am even more pleased to speak to it during this take note debate.

Coming from the riding of St. Catharines, or more commonly known as "The Garden City", this year's budget theme, "Turning a New Leaf", along with the budget, is perfectly suited for my community.

Four weeks ago, I participated in a Canada-Ontario affordable housing announcement in my riding entitled "Bethlehem Projects". Federal, provincial and municipal officials were there along with 200 members of the public. We attended the groundbreaking. The event was an excellent one. It is a good partnership and project for my community. It will provide the needed affordable housing in St. Catharines, in the Niagara region.

After the event, middle class folks literally lined up to speak to me about the positive aspects of the budget. That is who the budget addresses. The budget presents example after example of benefits for my community and our country.

Let us take child care, for example. An investment of over \$3.7 billion over two years for the universal child care benefit will provide all families with \$1,200 per year for each child under the age of six. In St. Catharines that means over 8,700 children and their parents will get a benefit from that.

We will invest in creating new child care spaces. The budget allocates \$250 million, beginning in 2007, to create real child care spaces as part of Canada's universal child care program.

We will provide a physical fitness tax credit of up \$500 to cover registration fees for children's sports. One might wonder how many children are under the age of 16 in St. Catherines. Twenty-three thousand five hundred children and their parents will benefit from this.

The previous member spoke about post-secondary education. Let me inform him in a little more detail what exactly that means. The budget provides \$370 million in new investments to foster excellence and accessibility in our colleges and universities. Here are some numbers.

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At Brock University in the Niagara region, right up on the hill from the St. Catharines riding, 17,000 students have the potential to benefit from this. At McMaster University, 20,000 students will benefit. At the University of Toronto, 73,000 will benefit. In Quebec, 2,200 students at Bishop's, 31,000 at Concordia, 33,000 at McGill and 36,000 at Laval will benefit. The numbers keep adding up.

There is also a new textbook tax credit which will benefit approximately 1.9 million Canadian students. It may seem small, but it is the right intent and it will provide over \$260 million over two years to these students.

We are going to expand the eligibility for the Canada student loans program by reducing the parental contribution required. It is estimated that such an improvement will allow over 30,000 additional students to gain access to student assistance. That is two or three universities when we look at the numbers. It will also allow 25,000 current student borrowers the opportunity to increase the amount of loan they receive. That is not to say they will not have to pay it back, but it will ensure they have the opportunity to attend post-secondary education.

We also address security for our borders in the budget. We have said that we will provide over 1,000 new RCMP officers and federal prosecutors to enhance law enforcement priorities such as drugs, corruption and border security. That is especially important from my perspective. I live very close to the border. A number of border communities surround St. Catharines: Niagara Falls, New York, Lewiston, Buffalo.

• (1620)

It is about security. It is about saying that we are ready and willing to make the investment that was not made over the past 13 years. This speaks to exactly why we should be moving forward on this issue with respect to the budget.

The budget deals with two very specific issues on crime. The first is a \$20 million commitment to communities to prevent youth crime. This is about prevention. Ideally, we need to put tools and textbooks into the hands of our young people, not guns and not gangs; tools that will help them realize that they can grow up to lead productive lives and participate in the democracy of this country.

We have also set aside \$26 million in this budget to implement programs and to provide better services for victims of crime. They should not be last on the list when it comes to crime and the results of criminal activity. They should be first. We will ensure they have the money necessary to attend court proceedings. No matter what happens in court, we do not want it to cost the victims of those crimes money to attend. We want to ensure they are not shunned, that they are listened to and that their testimony is acted upon.

We are committed to implementing a 10 year plan to strengthen health care. Transfers for health care will rise by 6% this year and 6% next year. As part of that plan, the government has already provided \$5.5 billion for the wait time reduction transfer to help ensure that Canadians will receive the health care they need when they need it. We will invest over \$52 million per year for the next five years to improve screening, for prevention and research activities and to help coordinate efforts with the provinces and with cancer care advocacy groups throughout the country.

We will encourage more charitable giving from within each and every community in the country. We will eliminate the capital gains tax on donations of publicly listed securities to charities effective immediately. This will help create a donations pool of about \$300 million annually.

I would like to quote from a letter I received almost immediately after the budget was introduced. It was written by Liz Palmieri, the executive director of the Niagara Community Foundation. She says:

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Niagara Community Foundation I want to thank your government for including in the budget the announcement regarding gifts of securities to charities.

The charitable community across Canada has been advocating, for a number of years for a change in the treatment of these types of donations. In the recent election, the platforms of...your party...included provisions for a change and we were pleased to see this change being implemented on June 2.

We said that we would do it in our platform and we did it in the budget.

I want to mention a few charities: the John Howard Society of Niagara; the Niagara Ina Grafton Gage Foundation; the Niagara Peninsula Children's Centre; and, the Rotary Club of St. Catharines, Lakeshore, Charitable Trust are all thankful and will all benefit from the ability that this announcement in the budget makes.

Yes, there are tax reductions in this budget, a permanent legislative reduction in the lowest tax rate to 15.5% from 16% as of July 1, 2006. The budget also confirms that, starting on January 1, 2005 until June 2006, the lowest tax rate will be 15%.

The new Canada employment credit will provide relief on the first \$1,000 of employment income in recognition of expenses incurred by employees across the country. It means that millions of employees will now have a reduction they did not have prior to this budget.

• (1625)

The apprentices will benefit from the budget. The tool deduction and the Canada employment credit will provide tax relief to about 700,000 employed trades people. Our government has pledged to invest more than \$500 million over the next two years in the apprenticeship job creation tax credit and apprenticeship incentive grant, which will benefit over 100,000 apprentices.

I have enjoyed my experience on the finance committee thus far in the 39th Parliament. Although we have had our discussions to and fro, as the member for Markham—Unionville knows, we have, on a regular basis, debated the issue of tax reduction.

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We have been sitting for a couple of months. We have gone through the estimates clause by clause to see what benefits the budget contains for Canadians. It was interesting to find, after a question was posed by the member for Markham—Unionville, that if we had not had the 16% to 15.5% in this budget, which was unanimously agreed to at the third reading stage this morning because, I am happy to say, the Liberals finally understood that if they did not agree with the budget and if the budget had not passed then they would be voting against their 16% to 15% reduction, on which they so proudly campaigned in the last election. My hat is off to the Liberals for supporting the budget this morning because they supported their budget cuts.

We could talk this afternoon about non-legislated boondoggles, sponsorship, gun registry and those cost overruns but we need to talk about the point my colleague, the member for Peterborough, made at committee when he said that the burden of tax on the people needs to go down, not up. The budget actually does that. It provides \$20 billion for middle class, for lower middle class folks and for those in the lower income brackets who need tax relief. They will get it in spades because it is more tax relief than we saw in the last four budgets combined.

While I applaud the efforts across the way to reduce taxes in 2005, those reductions were not included in the 2005 budget. They were done through a ways and means motion that never carried into anything that was in legislation. It came a year too late and, I might say, a dollar short from what this budget actually provides for the people of this country and the people in my community.

The budget, when implemented, will see 655,000 individuals freed from the chains of paying federal income tax. This will be seniors, low income earners, middle class earners and anyone who actually pays GST. Anyone who picks up a product anywhere that is taxed by GST will, after July 1, pay less than they are paying today.

I want to reinforce to the House that the budget is good for Canadians and it is good for the folks in my community of St. Catharines.

I want to take a page out of what has happened over the past, let us say since the end of November until today. Leading up to the last election we made commitments to Canadians, as I made commitments to the people in my community, and we told Canadians that if we were to become government we would actually follow through on our commitments. This budget proves that we have done that.

• (1630)

If we were to put the campaign document and this year's federal budget side by side, we would find they agree with each other. The budget enforces our campaign commitment. This sets the stage for a renewed relationship with the 308 ridings that we represent here in Ottawa. It tells Canadians that we do what we say we will do, that we will be accountable and that we will implement the commitments we made before we were elected.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am not much of a poker player but if I were I would certainly want to play with that member. He gives his hand away every time, especially when we are talking about taxes.

I want to ask him an important question concerning health care. One of the items in the throne speech had to do with guaranteed wait times for health care. In the last Parliament, the Government of Canada met with the provinces and agreed upon establishing benchmarks for wait times. The Conservative Party platform, as one of the five points included in the throne speech, included guaranteed wait times. This involves the cost of transferring patients and their families to other provinces or down to the United States. I think all members would agree that this is an important and significant investment to make.

The member talked about health care increases of 6%, which is true in the budget, but 6% was the increase scheduled under the \$42 billion health accord negotiated by the previous government. The Minister of Health has said publicly that moneys for the wait time guarantees is adequately covered in the \$42 billion accord. This is news to the provinces and to this House.

I want to know how the Conservative Party can promise to do something that has already been done.

• (1635)

Mr. Rick Dykstra: Mr. Speaker, I do not blame him for one minute for trying to defend the actions of his government over the last 13 years. However, I would like to point out a couple of things.

First, he is indeed correct. We have five priorities and we are acting on all five of them. As we saw this morning, some are easier to get through the House than others. Health care is a priority for all Canadians but it is not going to be solved with the simple snap of the fingers. It will take negotiations and meetings with provincial leaders and, without question, it will take money.

I would like to draw a little analogy for the member to give him an understanding of our commitment to ensuring we are moving forward. Thirteen years equals about 4,745 days, which is approximately how long the Liberals were in government. We have been in government for about 120 days and we have acted to the point where this health care priority with respect to wait times is on the agenda. It is one of the five priorities that we will be implementing. If we put 120 days next to 4,745 days, I think the member would have to say that we are doing a pretty good job.

Mrs. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was quite interested in what the member for St. Catharines had to say. In all of his eulogizing about the great benefits this budget has for students, how can he explain that there was no money set aside for grants and that all of the budget in terms of students is directed at ways to help them increase their debt?

Could he also explain to me how \$80 for a textbook will help when \$80 is about the cost of one textbook and students require many textbooks?

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Mr. Rick Dykstra: Mr. Speaker, as the member for London—Fanshawe knows, part of the reason we are in the situation we are in with respect to the issue surrounding the cost of education for students goes back a few years, to 1994, when there were significant transfer cuts from the former federal government to what was then the provincial NDP government. If anyone can remember the days of the NDP provincial government from 1990 to 1995, students were crying on the steps of Queen's Park on how they were going to afford an education.

While the member may disagree with assisting students through the means of a textbook credit by ensuring that students are not excluded from an opportunity to get loans or grants to attend universities, I would simply say to the member that this budget is a step in the right direction, in a positive direction, for the hundreds of thousands of students across this country who are attending universities.

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to have an opportunity to share some information and ideas with the hon. member. He sits on the finance committee and I know he will certainly enjoy the challenges that he is going to face in order to keep up with the commitments that his government has made.

You talked in particular about crime prevention grants. I have to tell you that coming from an important riding in Toronto the investment in those areas is extremely important. I know that you probably share that same interest and I would certainly hope that the government does as we move forward in looking at how we are going to rationalize some of the things that are on the table.

We do not have a child care program, other than \$1,200 a year that may apply to some. It is not going to mean much in my riding. How do we balance the issue of eliminating what was going to be an effective child care program versus \$280 million more being put in the budget for prisons?

It would seem to me that we should be doing more in the area of crime prevention and investing in our young people, so that we do not end up with them going the wrong way and ending up in prisons. That includes ensuring they have opportunities for post-secondary education.

I would hope that in the future, while on the finance committee, with all of the different priorities in looking for a balanced budget, you will keep those issues in mind as you move forward.

• (1640)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): I do not sit on the finance committee, but I am sure the hon. member will take that advice.

The hon. member for St. Catharines.

Mr. Rick Dykstra: Mr. Speaker, I know the hon. member has subbed in a couple of times on the finance committee and I have certainly appreciated her comments in committee.

In fact, she made the inference to ensuring that we have a justice system that ensures that criminals who do serious crimes are actually going to spend the necessary time in jail to pay for the crimes they have committed. I am not sure what that necessarily has to do with the child care program.

I would like to think that the investment being made within the context of this budget is going to address those issues, that being the payment that she spoke about to parents, so that it expands their choice in terms of child care and the investment that is going to be made to ensure we are building more child care spaces in the country in each of the ridings.

The member makes a good point that there are issues within her riding in the Toronto area as there are issues in my riding in the St. Catharines area. We want to ensure the investment is in the budget so that young people have the opportunity to work toward learning, whether it be through a textbook or a trade, and that their future is a positive one, not one that would lead to join a gang and learn how to shoot a gun. We need to all work together, all 308 ridings in this country, to ensure that does happen.

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. It occurs to me that during his speech the member raised a very good argument about the income tax rates of 15% and 16%. I wonder if he would care to table his income tax return and if he did not pay 16% last year on the first level, I would ask that he pay it now.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): That does not sound like a point of order. There are still a couple of minutes left in questions and comments.

The hon. member for Burlington.

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciated the speech by the member for St. Catharines. He talked about income taxes, but he also talked about the reduction in the GST. I know that the area of St. Catharines is a growing community with people moving there and lots of development happening.

I was wondering what his view and the view of his residents is on the reduction of the GST when it comes to making major purchases such as homes and cars which I know are important industries in St. Catharines.

Mr. Rick Dykstra: Mr. Speaker, certainly, a lot of visitors who drive down the QEW from Burlington to St. Catharines have nothing but glowing things to say about their member of Parliament for Burlington. Not only is he doing a great job here in the House, the people of Burlington are telling me in St. Catharines he is doing a great job for them.

The GST cut which the member speaks about is one that means a lot in the riding of St. Catharines with respect to vehicles. That is very true. General Motors operates in the city of St. Catharines. There is no doubt that the average saving that families or individuals would have when they purchase a new General Motors vehicle in St. Catharines or anywhere in this country is going to be significant when they make that purchase after July 1.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): Order, please. It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Sault Ste. Marie, passports; the hon. member for Windsor West, tourism industry.

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•(1645)

[*English*]

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Richmond.

The budget is not just a financial statement; it is at its core a statement about values, principles and priorities. It is not just an accounting exercise but an expression of our identity of who we are and what we aspire to be.

In that context, this budget, while containing a number of commendable features, is disappointing overall in the values it reflects and represents, and in the principles and priorities it espouses. It would not speak, for example, to my constituency which is a kind of rainbow constituency in that regard.

For example, in the matter of tax policy, the income tax for the poor and the vulnerable will go up while the GST, of which we just spoke, which disproportionately benefits the wealthy will go down. This is a tax policy that has not only been uniformly critiqued by most economists in this country but which constitutes an inverse value choice for an equitable tax policy.

In the matter of aboriginal people, the most vulnerable of the vulnerable, the government has not only substantially reduced the \$5 billion necessary for their needs but has scrapped the framework agreements including the historic Kelowna accord which is at the core of having an aboriginal justice agenda.

In the matter of women's rights and gender equity which should be a priority for our agenda, a budget should reflect that as a matter of principle of policy. The government appears to have done away with the principle of mainstreaming gender-based analysis throughout the budget. Otherwise the lowest income mothers of young children would not be getting much less the \$1,200 because the supplement is clawed back, let alone the other fallout with respect to issues of concern to women such as a central social services assistance, legal aid, anti-violence measures and the plight of aboriginal women.

In the matter of environmental protection which is inextricably bound up with our economy, our health, and indeed our planetary survival, the budget tends to marginalize and minimize the protection of the environment as a matter of principle and priority.

However, I want to focus on two priorities, two value choices in the budget which are wrong-headed as a matter of policy and disturbing as a matter of principle. The first wrong-headed policy choice, which is even suspect as a matter of law, is the commitment to more prisons and more prisoners at a time when crime rates are declining and have been falling for some time.

Indeed, the first expression of this commitment came in the budget speech of finance minister James Flaherty, when he announced that: "We are setting aside funds—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): Order, please. I would ask the hon. member for Mount Royal not to refer to members by name but by their title or ministry.

Hon. Irwin Cotler: Mr. Speaker, I did to refer to him as the finance minister.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): I think you did include his name. Just leave it as the finance minister.

Hon. Irwin Cotler: Correct. The finance minister stated:

We are setting aside funds to expand Canada's correctional facilities to house the expected increase in inmates as a result of changes in sentencing rules.

The budget is unclear as to the funds that are required and indeed it is unusual that one would make a prediction in a budget that one is going to increase the number of prisoners and prisons.

Leaving that aside, the changes in sentencing rules are neither warranted by the facts, falling crime rates, or the evidence, which demonstrates that the proposed and excessive mandatory minimum penalties would neither be effective nor a deterrent.

Indeed, the most comprehensive and recent study that was cited by the justice minister to justify expanded and enhanced mandatory minimums, by the respected authors Thomas Marvell and Carlisle Moody, actually rebuts the government's position. After examining the effects of mandatory minimums and other tough sentence enhancements on gun crimes across the U.S., they concluded that the gun related mandatory minimums do little to reduce crime or gun use. This is a study that has been cited by the minister in support of an evidence based approach with respect to enhanced mandatory minimums.

It is not surprising given the fact of falling crime rates; given the evidence that mandatory minimums are neither a deterrent nor effective; given the fact that they impact disproportionately the most vulnerable of people; and given the enormous cost of housing an inmate, some \$90,000 a year. This is an enormous cost which does not even factor in the building of the new correctional facilities that may be required. It is not surprising that Professor Marie-Andrée Bertrand, a distinguished criminologist at the Université de Montréal characterized the sentencing changes as a catastrophe.

•(1650)

[*Translation*]

She added, "No fewer than 24 new offences will be subject to four years of imprisonment. This is a catastrophe".

[*English*]

This commitment to enormous expenditures for more prisons and more inmates as a result of sentencing changes is devoid of any evidentiary basis. It is a disturbing value choice as a high priority in a budget. It contrasts dramatically with declining investments in university research and equitable access to higher education which prejudices our competitive role in a knowledge based economy.

This is yet another disturbing value choice. This time it is with education as a low priority as compared to enhanced mandatory minimums and non-evidentiary based approach as a high priority, even though that education is not only inextricably bound up with the imperatives of a knowledge based economy, but the defining signature of a society's values.

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Yet this budget allocates only \$250 million over five years to research and development, one-tenth of what the Liberal budget would have allocated, though it is crucial that Canada maintain its momentum of investing in innovation and research.

Indeed, over the last decade Canada has established a package of programs that have allowed universities, hospitals and research institutions, and society as a whole, to attract a large number of the most promising innovators in the world, including Canadians who have come back, repatriated to their homes here because of the attraction of this kind of support for research and education.

As well, when one speaks of investments in higher education and equitable access to post-secondary education, the Liberal budget had included a grant of \$6,000 to students over their four years at university, while the Conservative budget is giving students a tax break on textbooks of \$80 a year. Again, this is a disturbing value choice with respect to priorities and principles.

This budget does not provide the necessary leadership for the building of an egalitarian, caring and a compassionate society.

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the member some questions on child care. The Liberals in particular have raised a lot of concerns about the government's plan for child care. Obviously the Liberals do not like it, but we do not like their plan. I have a series of questions for the member with respect to child care.

Why should big government, as opposed to parents, decide what to do with our children? Why can parents not decide what to do with their children? The former Liberal government's plan proposed that there be a bureaucracy to take money from the federal government and give it to the provinces, who then would have another bureaucracy to give money to the municipalities, who then would have another bureaucracy to send money to, generally, public child care. Rarely would it be private child care. Is that not a lot of waste of money that could be used for caring for our children at that early age?

Finally, I do not recall the Liberal plan providing any new spaces. The Conservative plan is going to provide new spaces, but I do not recall the Liberals' plan setting forth any new spaces, certainly since they were elected over 13 years ago, and more particularly with their more recent plan.

The member talks about a number of things, and certainly this is an issue that the former Liberal government has been concerned with, but having listened to all of those concerns, does the member still feel the same way?

Hon. Irwin Cotler: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his question because it allows me to respond directly on point and to bring forward certain matters that I could not in my principal remarks.

His first question is, why should big government decide what is good for children? I might remind the hon. member that his government and Prime Minister spoke of an open federalism. The agreements that we have with respect to child care were agreements arrived at with the provinces in an open federalism, on behalf of the people and after consultation with the people. This is not big federal government imposing itself. This is the open federalism of which the

hon. member's government spoke in terms of the conclusion of agreements with respect to the provinces and territories on behalf of the people.

I will be delighted to stand while the hon. member has left the House, not even wishing to listen to the answer, but when one speaks about the matter of child care spaces, the cancellation of the child care agreements actually took \$3.6 billion away from Canadian communities. This funding was to expand early learning and child care options for over 100,000 families. It was to improve access, particularly for low income and rural families and for children with special needs. It was to enhance intervention services for children at risk. It was particularly disturbing of the government to single out aboriginal children for a \$25 million cut.

In conclusion, I would say that the Liberal plan was very responsive to governments in an open federalism. It was very responsive to communities. It was very responsive to child care advocates who themselves appraised it. In particular, it was going to provide the combination of early learning and child care with the necessary spaces, with particular sensitivity to low income families and their special needs.

• (1655)

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have two current justice bills, Bill C-9 and Bill C-10, that we are going to be dealing with in the next little while here in the House and at committee. How does that tie into the investment in prisons and the member's commitment on the issues of the aboriginals? Where are we going from a financial perspective? Clearly the member is talking about priorities that are very different from what the government has to say.

Hon. Irwin Cotler: Mr. Speaker, both of the legislative proposals of the Conservatives will impact disproportionately and prejudicially on the aboriginal community. The aboriginal community has been uniform in its protests against these initiatives, because we already have an overrepresentation of aboriginal people in the prisons of this country, in particular a growing overrepresentation of aboriginal women, and the impacts of these two proposals will only result in more aboriginal men and women in prison. That is not the way to address these concerns.

Hon. Raymond Chan (Richmond, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, each time the Conservative Party chanted "more, more, more" during the unveiling of the Conservative budget, we watched the fabric of our great nation unravel. Under Conservative leadership, Canada is moving from a "we" nation to a "me" nation. Instead of investing in the lives of Canadian children, students, families, businesses and seniors, the Conservative government offers small cash allowances and tax breaks and says, "Do it yourself".

The Conservative budget has failed Canadians on child care, climate change and environmental initiatives, research and development, health care and wait times, tax relief for low and middle income families, and fiscal responsibility of the government to all Canadians.

Government Orders

The federal government's role and responsibility is to manage the country's affairs and to design economic and social policies for the betterment of Canadians now and in the future. Budget 2006, however, is a shameful masquerade of political opportunism that is designed for short term political gain to the long term detriment of the country.

This budget exploits the most vulnerable Canadians by raising the lowest income tax rate and then attempts to buy votes with a 1% reduction in the GST. It is absolutely ridiculous that the government intends to make up lost revenues by increasing the taxes of those who are most in need.

Do members want more poor Conservative planning? The Conservative government has cancelled the early learning and child care agreements with the provinces and replaced them with a taxable monthly allowance. Shame.

The national child care strategy was designed to ensure that all Canadian children were given the same opportunity to succeed in life. This is the type of national strategy that Canadians want, not a nearsighted political tactic designed to buy votes.

The Conservative child care scheme offers families under \$3 per day. This is not a solution to the increasing need for affordable child care spaces or the need for a national early childhood education strategy.

As if \$20 a week for child care is not bad enough, low income parents will be losing the young child supplement of the Canada child tax benefit. The Conservatives are cutting \$1 billion from the CCTB, which was supposed to reach \$10 billion next year.

Through the early learning and child care agreements, the previous Liberal government designed and implemented a solution to these growing concerns. It is incredibly sad that instead of using a good policy and dealing with the real issues of child care in Canada, the Conservative government has opted for a band-aid solution and political engineering.

Do members want more poor Conservative planning? The budget fails to address the issue of climate change. The government has eliminated climate change programs and has cancelled Canada's commitment to the Kyoto accord. Shame.

Its transit tax credit is costly and ineffective. It will cost almost \$400 million over two years and increase transit use by only 5%. This translates to a cost of \$2,000 for each tonne of carbon dioxide saved, which is 10 to 100 times the cost per tonne under our project green plan.

The Liberal Party of Canada believes in investing in the environment and climate change programs, not the elimination of 15 made in Canada climate change programs.

• (1700)

Do members want to hear about more poor Conservative planning? The budget fails to make any significant investments in education and innovation.

Budget 2006 has cancelled more than \$3 billion worth of funding on education over the next five years, all of which would have gone directly to improve access to post-secondary education. Shame.

Additionally, the Conservative government has cancelled more than \$2 billion in funding over five years to increase support for granting councils, research programs and internships.

The Liberal government had a concrete vision that would have helped put us at the forefront of competitiveness and innovation. This lacklustre and visionless budget contains virtually nothing in this regard.

The Liberal government believed strongly in positioning Canada as a leader in the world by investing in innovation and research, education and increasing Canada's productivity.

For example, for university research, our last fiscal update provided \$2.5 billion. The Conservative budget provides \$200 million, less than one-tenth of our commitments. For student aid, our plan would have provided up to \$6,000 per student for tuition over a four year program. The Conservative plan provides only \$80 for textbooks.

The bottom line is that budget 2006 and the Conservative government are simply not committed to a long term investment strategy in education, innovation, research and competitiveness.

Do members want to hear about more poor Conservative planning? The budget fails to address the real needs of seniors.

The Conservative budget continues its policy of buying votes and not dealing with the issues that greatly affect Canadians. The Conservative plan offers a mere \$155 per eligible pensioner. There are no measures to allow for RSP income splitting between spouses, income securities or investment in long term care facilities.

By 2021 seniors will form 18% of Canada's population and we need responsive policies, programs and services to support this growing segment of our population. The Liberal government earmarked \$1 billion for a national caregiver strategy and a comprehensive national home and community care program.

The simple fact is that the Conservative budget does little to help Canada's seniors, especially those living near or just above the poverty line.

Canada needs a government that plans for a better future. The Conservative government has shown a constant theme through its budget and governance: buy votes, avoid tough issues, and when the press is negative, silence them.

Canada needs a government that will look to the future and tackle tough issues, not one that governs for its own future political gain.

Government Orders

• (1705)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): I see several members rising to ask questions. If we can keep questions and responses to a minute each, we can accommodate a few more questioners.

The hon. member for Halton.

Hon. Garth Turner (Halton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the hon. member's comments regarding child care and have a question for him.

In my riding, the federal and provincial governments were to put a program together under the Liberal plan, offering \$23.1 million, which in the region of Halton would create 600 child care spaces. That would leave 34,400 children in Halton without any new child care money and 15,000 families with no child care money at all. How can that possibly be a better plan than the current plan, which will give \$1,200 per year to every single one of those 15,000 parents in my riding? I ask the member to please explain.

Hon. Raymond Chan: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member asked a good question.

The problem is that without those 600 spaces, at least 600 families will not have a space for their children. I understand that this strategy is only the beginning, a down payment on building a national child care system for early learning for all Canadians in the long run. The problem is that providing \$1,200 a year, which is less than \$3 a day, will not allow anybody in this country to find a child care space. Not only is \$3 a day not enough, even if more money was added on to that \$3, people would not be able to find a space. In one child care centre in my riding there is a long waiting list. Four hundred families are waiting to get into one child care centre. This is why the Conservative plan fails Canadians.

Mr. John Williams (Edmonton—St. Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, people work five days a week, 250 days of the year. That actually works out to \$5 a day, not \$3 a day, because children do not go to day care seven days a week. Will the member please get his math straight.

Many Canadians live in rural Canada. What benefits did he or his party ever propose for people living on family farms a long way from urban day care?

My next question is quite simple. Given the fact that today a former member of the Government of Canada was found guilty and two other guys are already in jail because his party lost \$100 million, what benefit was that to Canadians as they were filling their pockets courtesy of the taxpayer?

• (1710)

Hon. Raymond Chan: Mr. Speaker, it is amazing that the hon. member only knows of people who work five days a week. In Canada there are people on the poverty line who work for minimum wage and have to work six or seven days a week. The Conservatives are going to ignore all of those people who cannot find any child care spaces. The problem with the Conservative members is that they live high in the upper echelons of this country and never realize the problems facing average citizens who have to provide food for their families.

On the issue of scandals and corruption, I would like to remind the hon. member about a book called *On the Take* which is about somebody who is a mentor of the current Prime Minister.

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would rather not use all of the negatives like some others in the opposition. I would much rather talk about the budget and the positive things we all are trying to do in this House of Commons rather than throw around more falsehoods and all the rest of it.

As a former minister of multiculturalism, when you were dealing with immigrant communities in particular, what were some of the issues that tied into the budget and child care that left an impression on you?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): I would like to remind the hon. member for York West that she must address her comments through the chair and not directly at members.

Hon. Raymond Chan: Mr. Speaker, the problem facing the immigrant community these days is the issue of wait times for sponsoring their parents, grandparents and other relatives. The former Liberal government provided \$70 million to reduce wait times for processing immigrants who wanted to come to Canada. There will now be wait times of up to four years. Reducing the processing time is important. The Conservative government has eliminated that \$70 million.

Under the previous government, a one time \$2 billion was set aside for immigrants to integrate into Canadian society. This money was to be used for such things as language training. The Conservative government has cut most of that funding, leaving only \$300 million. That is definitely not enough.

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am speaking today on behalf of the New Democratic Party. As many members of the House are well aware, the New Democrats have been unequivocal in opposing the bill. There are many elements to the bill that simply do not address the very pressing needs of Canadians in this day and age.

Canada is one of the wealthiest countries in the world, yet increasingly we see problems with the poverty gap, the huge gap between those who have and those who do not. A recent United Nations report talks about the disparity around any number of issues, including housing, access to legal aid, and so on.

One of the things I specifically would like to address today is the fact that aboriginal and first nations people in this country have not seen their needs met in this most recent budget. In a letter dated May 4, 2006 that was sent to the Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, the British Columbia Assembly of First Nations, the First Nations Summit and the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs laid out a number of issues that they felt the budget failed to address. There are a couple of things that I want to quote from the letter, because it is very important that this information be on record. The letter said:

—the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development made many public commitments to “put wheels on the Kelowna Accord,” and yet, your government has chosen not to uphold the honour of the Crown. Your government has reneged on this historic multi-government agreement, and has proceeded to unilaterally implement its own plan to address our issues without any consultations with us.

The letter goes on to talk about the budget:

Government Orders

Your government has abandoned this Accord and your budget reflects only a fraction of the financial commitments already committed by the Government of Canada to help improve the quality of life for First Nations and Aboriginal Canadians.

Your government has committed to addressing the fiscal imbalance with provinces, yet this budget does nothing to address the fiscal imbalance faced by First Nations governments. Spending on First Nations programs has been capped at 2% for the past ten years, and is far outpaced by rapid population growth and rising costs.

There were some token amounts in the budget that dealt with some of the issues in first nations and aboriginal communities. Yet it was far, far short of the desperate needs that have been identified in report after report that have come before the House in any number of formats.

It goes back to far before the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples which clearly called on the government of the day, which was then the Liberals, to implement a meaningful action plan that actually resulted in some differences in people's lives.

Now there is a Conservative government that is following on the Liberals' heels by failing to recognize that there are some critical issues that must be addressed in first nations, Inuit and Métis communities, as well as dealing with the off reserve and urban aboriginal issues.

The letter talks about the 2% gap. Since 1996, funding from Indian Affairs and Northern Development has been capped at 2%, yet population growth in first nations communities has far outstripped that 2% cap.

In a recent Auditor General's report, the Auditor General talks about the fact that in reviewing the first nations programming, she saw first nations funding increasing at 1.6%, yet population on reserve is growing at a rate of 11.2%. One does not need to be a mathematician to recognize there is a significant gap in the funding for services versus the population growth.

Mr. Speaker, I failed to mention that I will be splitting my time with the member for Vancouver Island North.

In that report, the Auditor General was very critical on a number of fronts, including housing. The Auditor General spoke about the fact that housing is in crisis on reserve. The mouldy housing is of crisis proportion in this country.

• (1715)

The member for Timmins—James Bay has talked about the fact that Kashechewan has been facing problem after problem. In Garden Hill there is an outbreak of tuberculosis and it is partially due to the housing conditions on reserve.

In my own community of Nanaimo—Cowichan we have one of the largest first nations populations on reserve in the province of British Columbia and there are significant housing problems in terms of the mould.

The Auditor General has talked about the failure of the government, and in that case it was the Liberal government's track record, but the failure of the government to adequately address this. It is a matter of shoddy housing construction. It is a matter of overcrowding. It is a matter of an ineffective approach in dealing with this critical issue.

As well, the budget failed to deal with on reserve housing and the crisis around housing. It also failed to deal with some of the very critical health issues on reserve. We are talking about tuberculosis. We are talking about diabetes. There was no mention in the budget for first nations health.

These are concrete, valid reasons to vote against the budget. I am only focusing on first nations. There are many other issues that I cannot begin to touch on in the very short time that is available for me.

In conclusion, it is important that Canadians understand that the NDP did not support this budget, that the budget falls far short of the honour of the Crown to deal with the issues before it in terms of its responsibility toward first nations communities and aboriginal communities in this country. I would urge people to continue to work together to make sure that these matters are addressed.

• (1720)

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to the hon. member. Quite frankly I am concerned as to whether or not the hon. member has actually read the budget because there were significant investments made for first nations Canadians in the budget. Certainly notwithstanding \$300 million for off reserve housing, \$300 million for northern housing, \$450 million to address on reserve concerns, \$2.2 billion is going to the residential schools agreement. I am quite shocked that the member does not seem to be aware of these investments.

Does the member have any idea what the base funding is this year for the Department of Indian Affairs? I know how much it is. I am wondering if she does.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the member actually listened to what I had to say. I was specifically speaking about on reserve issues. There was not a significant amount of money put in this current budget to deal with on reserve issues.

As well, with regard to the Kelowna accord that was in place, the amount of money that is in the budget falls far short of what was a plan that was developed with broad consultations across this country. It took 18 months to get to the point of that very significant document, which the government has chosen to completely disregard.

I want to assure the member that I also paid very close attention to the budget. The \$450 million in the budget over two years falls far short of any of the analysis that has been done on the critical shortage of funding and resources required in first nations communities immediately.

I do not need that member to lecture me on what is available to first nations communities.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for a reasoned and impassioned argument on behalf of our aboriginal peoples.

Government Orders

It is really outrageous that someone would suggest that there is money in a departmental budget. He well knows there are moneys in a variety of budgets to help all Canadians. The reality is that aboriginals are the least among Canadians in so many regards. Anyone who has spent any time on reserve and has seen the conditions there would appreciate that these are areas where extraordinary measures are necessary. I would like to give the member an opportunity to further educate the member about the importance of our aboriginal peoples.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has worked extensively on issues such as fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. That disorder is just one example of a shortfall in working with first nations communities.

There is significant investment required for indigenous children in care which I did not even begin to speak about. This is a human rights issue. Analysis has been done on indigenous children in care on reserve that suggests there is a \$109 million shortfall annually in dealing with the matters that are facing people on reserve. Part of this shortfall is a comparison between what the provinces spend and what the federal government actually invests. The government will tell us that it is putting in \$25 million; however, \$109 million is required to deal with the children in care issues for children in protection.

Ms. Catherine Bell (Vancouver Island North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Nanaimo—Cowichan for sharing her time with me today.

The government had an opportunity in this budget to make a real difference for ordinary Canadians, but it missed that opportunity. Billions of dollars in surplus could have been invested in the kinds of programs and services that would make a real difference for working families.

People of my riding of Vancouver Island North are looking for investments in our communities. Once vibrant forestry and fishing communities are on the brink of becoming ghost towns. There is a real need for something to be done. Those people are having to struggle to maintain their communities through a very difficult time.

More than 20 different first nations bands in the riding are also struggling. They have a proud history in Vancouver Island North, but it is hard to move forward when the very basic things they need, which most of us take for granted such as adequate housing, clean water, roads and bridges to their communities, are either lacking or they are in serious need of repairs. I will come back to some of that in a minute.

First, I want to talk about the things which all Canadians are concerned about, such as our health care system that is in need of serious repair. Waiting lists for surgeries and emergency rooms grow. There are not enough trained health care professionals. With the surplus, the government could have addressed some of those issues, an area that the previous Liberal government cut to the very bones over the past 13 years.

The Romanow report, a comprehensive study on what is needed in our health care system, outlines what Canadians are looking for when it comes to solutions. It says that federal funding to the provinces must be increased by at least 25% to begin to address the serious shortages.

The government could have invested in home care for our seniors. Inadequate home care services and funding impacts our most vulnerable family members. With the shortage of hospital beds, funding for home care would also help alleviate wait times in our hospitals. It would provide dignity for our seniors who helped build our country. Once again we are letting them down.

Another major industry in my riding is the forest industry. It has had its share of difficulties over the past two years, including the illegal softwood lumber tariffs and raw log exports. While the budget mentions \$400 million Canada-wide for the forest industry, half of that is to address the pine beetle infestation. Raw log exports are killing our north island communities. It is a serious issue and it is one that must be addressed. While it is important to settle our cross-border disputes, it is shameful that there is less money in this budget for Canada's forest industry than we have left on the table in the softwood lumber deal. There was an opportunity to invest in resource communities. With billions of surplus dollars, a fraction of those would have helped these communities to diversify and grow again.

Another serious crisis is in our fishing industry. We have seen almost a collapse of our wild salmon industry. We were looking for some money for salmon enhancement programs and rebuilding the aging infrastructure of our hatcheries. There was nothing in the budget except another tax credit.

North island is concerned about investment in our communities and in our resource industries.

Earlier in my remarks to one of my hon. colleagues, I talked about the deplorable conditions on first nation reserves. I have had several letters from some very young community members from Kingcome Inlet. I would like to read two more excerpts from these children's letters.

Morgan Brittany, an 11 year old in grade five, has lived in Kingcome Inlet for nine years. Her family has lived there for hundreds of years. She writes:

We need your help because there are accidents in the river. We need a road.

We travel on roads every day and we take that for granted. All they are asking for is a road. She continues:

We have to wait for high tide to go down the river. We have to wait for boats too. Sometimes it is very cold and we can die. It is dangerous for babies and elders. I hope you can help us.

Janessa Voyageur is a 10 year old in grade four. She has lived in Kingcome Inlet for one year. Her family has also lived there for hundreds of years. She writes:

We need your help because we always have floods. When it floods, big logs float down the river and if we are sick and it's flooding we can't even get to the airplane. It costs lots of money to get our groceries up the river. Please give us a road so everything can be easy for us.

• (1725)

With a lack of investment in first nations on reserve communities, to which I think the previous colleague spoke, residents of those communities are facing serious issues. They are already remote and we have made them even more remote.

It is important that we address some of these issues and ensure that there is adequate funding for the first nations across Canada and in my riding of Vancouver Island North. They are struggling day by day to live and not be thought of as second class citizens.

• (1730)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): It being 5:30 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings at this time. Pursuant to the order made earlier today the motion is deemed withdrawn.

(Motion withdrawn)

* * *

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—GASOLINE PRICES

The House resumed from June 1 consideration of the motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): Pursuant to order made on Thursday, June 1, 2006, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion of the hon. member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup relating to the business of supply.

Call in the members.

• (1800)

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

(Division No. 12)

YEAS

Members

André	Angus
Asselin	Atamanenko
Bachand	Barbot
Bell (Vancouver Island North)	Bellavance
Bevington	Bigras
Black	Blaikie
Blais	Bonsant
Bouchard	Bourgeois
Brunelle	Carrier
Charlton	Chow
Christopherson	Comartin
Crête	Crowder
Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)	DeBellefeuille
Demers	Deschamps
Dewar	Duceppe
Faille	Freeman
Gagnon	Gaudet
Gauthier	Godin
Guay	Guimond
Julian	Kotto
Laforest	Laframboise
Lalonde	Lavallée
Layton	Lemay
Lessard	Lévesque
Loubier	Lussier
Malo	Marston
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Masse	Mathysen
McDonough	Ménard (Hochelaga)

Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)	Mourani
Nadeau	Nash
Ouellet	Paquette
Perron	Picard
Plamondon	Priddy
Roy	Sauvageau
Savoie	Siksay
St-Cyr	St-Hilaire
Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)	
Vincent	
Wasylycia-Leis— 77	

Business of Supply

NAYS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Albrecht	Alghabra
Allen	Allison
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Arthur
Bagnell	Bains
Baird	Barnes
Batters	Beaumier
Bell (North Vancouver)	Bennett
Benoit	Bernier
Bezan	Blackburn
Bonin	Boucher
Breitkreuz	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Byrne	Calkins
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)	Cannon (Pontiac)
Carrie	Casson
Chamberlain	Chan
Chong	Clement
Comuzzi	Cotler
Cullen (Etobicoke North)	Cummins
Cuzner	D'Amours
Davidson	Day
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dhaliwal	Dhalla
Dion	Dosanjh
Doyle	Dykstra
Easter	Emerson
Epp	Eyking
Fast	Finley
Fitzpatrick	Fletcher
Folco	Fontana
Fry	Galipeau
Gallant	Godfrey
Goldring	Goodale
Goodyear	Gourde
Graham	Grewal
Guarnieri	Guergis
Hanger	Harper
Harris	Harvey
Hawn	Hearn
Hiebert	Hill
Hinton	Holland
Hubbard	Jaffer
Jean	Jennings
Kadis	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Karetak-Lindell	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Keeper	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Khan	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	LeBlanc
Lee	Lemieux
Lukiwski	Lunn
Lunney	MacAulay
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Malhi	Maloney
Manning	Mark
Marleau	Matthews
Mayes	McCallum
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McTeague	Menzies
Merasty	Merrifield
Miller	Mills
Minna	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)
Neville	Nicholson
Norlock	O'Connor
Obhrai	Oda

Government Orders

Owen	Pacetti
Pallister	Paradis
Patry	Peterson
Petit	Poilievre
Prentice	Preston
Proulx	Rajotte
Ratansi	Redman
Regan	Reid
Richardson	Ritz
Rodriguez	Rota
Russell	Savage
Scheer	Schellenberger
Scott	Sgro
Shipley	Silva
Simard	Skelton
Smith	Solberg
Sorenson	St. Amand
St. Denis	Stanton
Steckle	Storseth
Strahl	Stronach
Sweet	Szabo
Telegdi	Temelkovski
Thibault (West Nova)	Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Thompson (Wild Rose)	Tilson
Toews	Tonks
Trost	Turner
Tweed	Valley
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vellacott	Verner
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson
Wilfert	Williams
Wilson	Wrzesnewskyj
Yelich	Zed — 204

PAIRED

Members

Cardin Flaherty— 2

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

* * *

[English]

CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed from June 5 consideration of the motion that Bill C-9, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (conditional sentence of imprisonment), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading of Bill C-9.

• (1810)

[Translation]

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

*(Division No. 13)***YEAS**

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Albrecht	Alghabra
Allen	Allison
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Angus
Arthur	Atamanenko
Bagnell	Bains
Baird	Barnes
Batters	Beaumier

Bell (Vancouver Island North)	Bell (North Vancouver)
Bennett	Benoit
Bernier	Bezan
Black	Blackburn
Blaikie	Bonin
Boshcoff	Boucher
Breitkreuz	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Byrne	Calkins
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)	Cannon (Pontiac)
Carrie	Casson
Chamberlain	Chan
Charlton	Chong
Chow	Christopherson
Clement	Comartin
Comuzzi	Cotler
Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)	Cullen (Etobicoke North)
Cummins	Cuzner
D'Amours	Davidson
Day	Del Mastro
Devolin	Dewar
Dhaliwal	Dhalla
Dion	Dosanjh
Doyle	Dykstra
Easter	Emerson
Epp	Eyking
Fast	Finley
Fitzpatrick	Fletcher
Folco	Fontana
Fry	Galipeau
Gallant	Godfrey
Godin	Goldring
Goodale	Goodyear
Gourde	Graham
Grewal	Guarnieri
Guergis	Hanger
Harper	Harris
Harvey	Hawn
Hearn	Hiebert
Hill	Hinton
Holland	Hubbard
Jaffer	Jean
Jennings	Julian
Kadis	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Karetak-Lindell	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Keeper	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Khan	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Layton
LeBlanc	Lee
Lemieux	Lukiwski
Lunn	Lunney
MacAulay	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Malhi
Maloney	Manning
Mark	Marleau
Marston	Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	Masse
Mathysen	Mathews
Mayes	McCallum
McDonough	McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	McTeague
Menzies	Merasty
Merrifield	Miller
Mills	Minna
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)	Murphy (Charlottetown)
Nash	Neville
Nicholson	Norlock
O'Connor	Obhrai
Oda	Owen
Pacetti	Pallister
Paradis	Patry
Peterson	Petit
Poilievre	Prentice
Preston	Priddy
Proulx	Rajotte
Ratansi	Redman
Regan	Reid
Richardson	Ritz
Rodriguez	Rota
Russell	Savage
Savoie	Scheer

Schellenberger
Sgro
Silva
Skelton
Solberg
St. Amand
Stanton
Storseth
Stronach
Szabo
Temelkovski
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Tilson
Tonks
Turner
Valley
Van Loan
Verner
Warawa
Wasylycia-Leis
Wilfert
Wilson
Yetich

Scott
Shipley
Simard
Smith
Sorenson
St. Denis
Steckle
Strahl
Sweet
Telegdi
Thibault (West Nova)
Thompson (Wild Rose)
Toews
Trost
Tweed
Van Kesteren
Vellacott
Wallace
Warkentin
Watson
Williams
Wrzesnewskyj
Zed— 230

NAYS

Members

André
Bachand
Bellavance
Blais
Bouchard
Brunelle
Crête
Demers
Duceppe
Freeman
Gaudet
Guay
Kotto
Laframboise
Lavallée
Lessard
Loubier
Malo
Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Nadeau
Paquette
Picard
Roy
St-Cyr
Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)
Vincent— 50

Asselin
Barbot
Bigras
Bonsant
Bourgeois
Carrier
DeBellefeuille
Deschamps
Faille
Gagnon
Gauthier
Guimond
Laforest
Lalonde
Lemay
Lévesque
Lussier
Ménard (Hochelaga)
Mourani
Ouellet
Perron
Plamondon
Sauvageau
St-Hilaire

PAIRED

Members

Cardin
Flaherty— 2

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

[English]

The House resumed from June 5 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred record division on the motion to concur in the second report of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans.

Routine Proceedings

● (1820)

[Translation]

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

(Division No. 14)

YEAS

Members

Abbott
Albrecht
Allen
Ambrose
Anderson
Angus
Asselin
Bachand
Bains
Barbot
Batters
Bell (Vancouver Island North)
Bellavance
Benoit
Bevington
Bigras
Blackburn
Blais
Bonsant
Bouchard
Bourgeois
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Bruinooge
Byrne
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Carrie
Casson
Chan
Chong
Christopherson
Comartin
Cotler
Crowder
Cullen (Etobicoke North)
Cuzner
Davidson
DeBellefeuille
Demers
Devolin
Dhaliwal
Dion
Doyle
Dykstra
Emerson
Eyking
Fast
Fitzpatrick
Folco
Freeman
Gagnon
Gallant
Gauthier
Godin
Goodale
Gourde
Grewal
Guay
Guimond
Harper
Harvey
Hearn
Hill
Holland
Jaffer
Jennings
Kadis
Karetak-Lindell
Keeper
Khan
Kotto

Abлонczy
Alghabra
Allison
Anders
André
Arthur
Atamanenko
Bagnell
Baird
Barnes
Beaumier
Bell (North Vancouver)
Bennett
Bernier
Bezan
Black
Blaikie
Bonin
Boshcoff
Boucher
Breitkreuz
Brown (Barrie)
Brunelle
Calkins
Cannon (Pontiac)
Carrier
Chamberlain
Charlton
Chow
Clement
Comuzzi
Crête
Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)
Cummins
D'Amours
Day
Del Mastro
Deschamps
Dewar
Dhalla
Dosanjh
Duceppe
Easter
Epp
Faille
Finley
Fletcher
Fontana
Fry
Galipeau
Gaudet
Godfrey
Goldring
Goodyear
Graham
Guarnieri
Guergis
Hanger
Harris
Hawn
Hiebert
Hinton
Hubbard
Jean
Julian
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)

Private Members' Business

Laforest	Laframboise
Lake	Lalonde
Lauzon	Lavallée
Layton	LeBlanc
Lee	Lemay
Lemieux	Lessard
Lévesque	Loubier
Lukiwski	Lunn
Lunney	Lussier
MacAulay	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Malhi
Malo	Maloney
Manning	Mark
Marleau	Marston
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Masse	Mathysen
Matthews	Mayes
McCallum	McDonough
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McTeague	Ménard (Hochelaga)
Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)	Menzies
Merasty	Merrifield
Miller	Mills
Minna	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Mourani
Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)	Murphy (Charlottetown)
Nadeau	Nash
Neville	Nicholson
Norlock	O'Connor
Obhrai	Oda
Ouellet	Owen
Pacetti	Pallister
Paquette	Paradis
Patry	Perron
Peterson	Petit
Picard	Plamondon
Poillievre	Prentice
Preston	Priddy
Proulx	Rajotte
Ratansi	Redman
Regan	Reid
Richardson	Ritz
Rodriguez	Rota
Roy	Russell
Sauvageau	Savage
Savoie	Scheer
Schellenberger	Scott
Sgro	Shiplay
Siksay	Silva
Simard	Skelton
Smith	Solberg
Sorenson	St-Cyr
St-Hilaire	St. Amand
St. Denis	Stanton
Steckle	Storseth
Strahl	Stronach
Sweet	Szabo
Telegdi	Temelkovski
Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)	Thompson (Wild Rose)
Thibault (West Nova)	Toews
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)	Trost
Tilson	Tweed
Tonks	Van Kesteren
Turner	Vellacott
Valley	Vincent
Van Loan	Warawa
Verner	Wasylcyia-Leis
Wallace	Wilfert
Warkentin	Wilson
Watson	Yelich
Williams	
Wrzesnewskyj	
Zed- — 283	

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Members

Cardin

Flaherty- — 2

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

[English]

It being 6:23 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

● (1825)

[Translation]

CANADA LABOUR CODE

Mr. Richard Nadeau (Gatineau, BQ) moved that Bill C-257, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code (replacement workers), be now read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to raise a point of order in this House. I would like to be allowed to proceed calmly, because this is a matter that has very important consequences for the House and the future of our work.

First, I should say that my comments will pertain to the royal recommendation. Recently, and primarily because of the new context we find ourselves in, with a minority government, the issue of the royal recommendation has become much more important.

What we have to understand is that, in the case of a majority government, since the royal recommendation is considered less indispensable, the government can always rescue a private member's bill by a majority vote of its members. But in the case of a minority government, as the two most recent governments have been, the royal recommendation becomes very important.

When a bill is passed and accepted by the House of Commons, it becomes effective, and the government has no choice but to comply with it. If the bill involves additional expenditures of public funds, you will understand, Mr. Speaker, that it could be problematic for the government to allow the House of Commons to commit public funds without executive power. This is a privilege of the executive, the government, not the House of Commons.

However, Bill C-257 introduced by my colleague from Gatineau, which is an anti-scab bill that applies to workers who come under the Canada Labour Code, was initially deemed by the clerk to require a royal recommendation. Mr. Speaker, I know that you intended to review this whole issue in light of the complexity of the implications. You will understand my surprise when I realized that this is the first time in 17 years, during which time 10 such bills have been introduced here in this House, that the anti-scab bill has required a royal recommendation. I therefore checked the record. Mr. Speaker, I looked to your own decisions for material to use in my argument today.

Private Members' Business

When Bill C-263 was introduced by my former colleague, Roger Clavet, the Speaker said, right here in this House—you were in the chair: “Royal recommendation is particularly important, and as Speaker of the House of Commons, I must say that you have to be extremely careful, and we have to be extremely vigilant, not to commit public moneys under a minority government that could be overturned by a vote in the House of Commons”. Mr. Speaker, you were absolutely right. Except that last year, when Roger Clavet introduced his bill despite that warning—you were well aware of the dangers—you did not ask for royal recommendation for that anti-scab bill, which was exactly the same as the one introduced today.

The clerks told us that two types of expenditures may be considered for royal recommendation. The first is operational expenditures for running departments. The second is statutory expenditures, that is, expenditures automatically incurred upon the implementation of a bill.

Mr. Speaker, according to your clerks, operational expenditures do not require royal recommendation because they are part of the overall cost of running the Government of Canada. Statutory expenditures, on the other hand, require royal recommendation because they are additional expenditures made when the bill is adopted.

• (1830)

In our view, Bill C-257, tabled by my colleague from Gatineau, requires no royal recommendation. No one indicated to my colleague, either at the time his bill was being prepared or at the time it was tabled, that a royal recommendation would be necessary. I understand that he was not told this. Last year, you yourself deemed the bill receivable, and the context was that of a minority government. Nothing has changed in that regard. I therefore assume that everyone believed, at the time of tabling, that no royal recommendation was necessary, and no one required one of my colleague.

Now we are told in mid-course that, as the bill provides for an investigator who may be designated by the Minister of Labour—whom I salute, as he is now present in this chamber—this is a new role, and therefore an expenditure inherent in the bill. So the bill requires a royal recommendation. I point out that the work of a Department of Labour investigator, ordered by the minister, depends on the needs of the situation. Sometimes he works on this, sometimes he investigates that. That is what we call operating expenses, not statutory expenditures.

Since we are passing an antiscab bill, with due respect for the preliminary decision of the clerk, no additional inspector may be hired at the Department of Labour. There are already staff in place to perform this very work, whose job description corresponds in every respect to the investigations that the minister might request. He will not necessarily request them. So this is an expense that is possible, but possible within the operations of the department. Hence there is nothing that requires what we call a royal recommendation.

I checked, and under the Canada Labour Code, labour relations officers have this very mandate. The minister is quite aware of this. He has a certain number of tasks performed by this personnel.

I searched a little further. On March 21, 2005, you yourself rendered a decision in the case of Bill C-331 which provided for negotiations with the Ukrainian community. That bill allocated so-called public money and could have required a spending authority. In your great wisdom, you declared that the bill provided for the conduct of negotiations with the Ukrainian community, and that it could not be established in advance that there would necessarily be costs related to those negotiations. Since a royal recommendation is not necessary for things which may never in fact occur, it was not necessary for section 3 of that bill. It was thus ordered by the great wisdom of the House, your own and that of the clerk, that in the case of a bill which provided for negotiations with the Ukrainian community, it could not be predicted that there would inevitably be costs. Furthermore since the costs generated would not be immediate, they would be operating costs, costs which—according to the clerks—never require royal recommendation. So this is a good decision you made. You have made others that were just as good, about which I would like to speak to you.

On October 29, 2003, in your great wisdom, when examining a bill on restoring the lighthouses of the St. Lawrence, you recognized that:

—when heritage lighthouses are designated, there may be an expenditure of public funds. However, I would characterize those expenditures as falling within departmental operational costs, for which an appropriation would have been obtained in the usual manner. From year to year, such expenditures would vary depending on the condition and number of heritage lighthouse structures and on the effects of weather. Such operational expenditures are covered through the annual appropriation act that Parliament considers and approves.

• (1835)

You spoke wisely when you stated:

Therefore, after listening to the submissions of hon. members and after reviewing my previous ruling and the provisions of this bill, I would conclude that Bill S-14 does not require a royal recommendation.

In your wisdom you recognized that, for this bill, royal recommendation was not required since it involved an operational cost and not a statutory expenditure arising from the bill.

You recognized, for Bill S-14 and a number of bills, that a royal recommendation was not required when the expenditure arising from adoption of the bill was not immediate.

For 17 years, you and your predecessors recognized that the anti-scab bill did not require royal recommendation. Last year, despite your vigilance and warning to the House of Commons, you did not request a royal recommendation for the same bill.

It would not make sense that suddenly, this year, parliamentary law, tradition and rulings no longer apply and that everything has changed.

I have the utmost respect for the role played by the office of the Clerk of the House of Commons. It is to advise and support members, to ensure that they are able to enforce the rules calmly and fairly, and, in the context in which they work, present parliamentary initiatives that will serve their fellow citizens, as my colleague from Gatineau has done.

Private Members' Business

I know that this idea would not occur to you, but at no time is it the role of the Speaker or the Clerk of the House of Commons to protect the government. You are above the political fray, as we know. You are here to ensure that the rights of all members, including independent members, are respected, and to ensure that we are able to represent our fellow citizens in an atmosphere of complete serenity, comfort and security.

I do not think—based on earlier rulings and the 10 bills tabled that never, after being assessed, needed a royal recommendation, and based on the role of an inspector—that it can be said, today, that this calls for a royal recommendation, when the inspectors exist and are already doing this work, and there is nothing to say that any more inspectors will be needed after this. Nor is there anything to say that the Minister of Labour will be having to order investigation after investigation to enforce an antiscab law.

Based on all these considerations, and relying on your earlier rulings, on the wisdom of the House of Commons, on our desire that our rules be followed and, most importantly, on the fact it is not the job of anyone here, other than the government itself, to protect minority governments—any more than it is the job of the Speaker to support the opposition, other than to ensure that it is able to use the rules properly and do its job—I am certain that in a few days you will deliver a ruling on the antiscab bill. As was the case on 10 occasions in the last 17 years, you will find that this bill does not call for a royal recommendation, that it can be voted on in the House of Commons and come into force to provide the best protection for working men and women covered by the Canada Labour Code, as is the case in Quebec for workers protected by the province's labour code.

I am certain that the Minister of Labour, who comes from Quebec, is familiar with Quebec's legislation and is not unaware of what is happening there in terms of labour relations, and that you yourself, all of Parliament, our colleagues in the Liberal opposition—who in fact gave us fairly broad support in our first attempt, as our friends in the NDP will certainly do—we will together vote to enact an antiscab bill, legislation that you will allow us to vote on and bring into force because we are in compliance with all of your earlier rulings.

● (1840)

[English]

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same point of order. I realize that you have heard from the House leader of the Bloc Québécois, but it is an important point of order so I would also like to make a brief comment. I will try to keep my comments as brief as possible because I know that members actually want to get into the substance of the debate about this very important bill.

I want to say that the ruling made about the royal recommendation certainly affects this bill, Bill C-257, but it also will affect the NDP bill being put forward by the member for Vancouver Island North, Bill C-295, which is similar in nature, dealing as it does with antiscab legislation. It would also, according to your ruling, Mr. Speaker, require a royal recommendation.

The ruling that was made is in effect being challenged because these two bills are based, as we have heard, on an earlier bill, Bill C-263 from the Bloc, that did not have this issue or this contradiction of the royal recommendation. We did not hear anything from the Table previously. It was not in question. I think this raises some questions and concerns for us about how the bill previously was not considered to be a problem in terms of a royal recommendation and yet this bill and the NDP bill will now have problems in terms of needing one.

In fact, I would point out that subclauses 2(2.5) through to 2(2.9) in Bill C-257 and Bill C-295 are exactly the same as the previous bill in the former Parliament, Bill C-263, which was debated and voted on without any mention of the royal recommendation. We believe that there is no need for any part of these bills to have a royal recommendation and we believe that the Table and the Speaker got it right in the 38th Parliament.

I would go on to add that even if the first ruling was wrong and this one was right, there is the additional issue that under the labour department, HRSD Canada employs personnel. They are funded from their existing budgets as authorized by the House to monitor compliance and initiate prosecutions when there are serious contraventions of the Canada Labour Code.

I fail to see why those people would not be able to do the work which we are referring to in subclauses 2(2.5) to 2(2.9) of the bill before us today. Really, it is a question of logic. Surely someone who monitors compliance and initiates prosecutions for contraventions of the Canada Labour Code is also able to ascertain if there is compliance to a ban on the use of scabs in a legal strike that extends from a collective bargaining situation.

We fail to see the difference in terms of work which would currently happen under the Labour Code and for which there is authority from the minister, the department and budgetary expenditures. Why would it be any different for the provisions of this bill? Both would involve the same skills and the same basic law.

We believe that the House can decide on the question of a ban on scabs without having to get into the question of how a minister or deputy minister manages their staff. The resources to do a job are already there. Therefore, we believe that Parliament does not need to re-authorize the expenditure even if there is some change in the scope of the duties.

For that reason alone, I would suggest that a royal recommendation is not required for any of the provisions of Bill C-257 or Bill C-295, which will also be debated in the House. I would hope that the Speaker and the Table would agree to stick by their earlier understanding of the former bill, which was not a problem and was not challenged. We are very concerned about this, Mr. Speaker, and we would ask you to consider it.

● (1845)

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me first say that I think economy of speech is a condition which has never affected my two hon. colleagues.

Private Members' Business

Let me say that the hon. member for Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean has raised a number of interesting precedents for the Chair to consider.

Mr. Speaker, the government is content to leave the matter in your capable hands for a final decision.

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean, the hon. member for Vancouver East and the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons for their submissions on this matter.

The Chair will certainly take into account every point made. I have to say that the ruling I made a few days ago concerning bills possibly requiring a royal recommendation was solely intended to express the Chair's concern about such bills. The purpose of that ruling was not to insist that a royal recommendation actually be requested.

I greatly appreciate the points that have been made on this matter by the hon. members. I will take them into consideration and come back to the House with a ruling.

I must also add that, normally, rulings on such matters are not made following the third reading of this kind of bill. As everyone here knows by now, bills may be considered up to the end of report stage and be voted on at each of the stages up to that point. It is only at third reading of a bill for which a royal recommendation was not obtained that a vote may not be taken in the House.

Given the current situation, the Chair will be making a ruling on this bill, probably before the beginning of third reading, which will likely take place within a few months.

We may now resume debate. The hon. member for Gatineau.

Mr. Richard Nadeau (Gatineau, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am very honoured to again present Bill C-257, an act to amend the Canada Labour Code (replacement workers).

The Bloc Québécois has made it a duty to present this anti-scab legislation for the tenth time. There should no longer be two categories of workers in Quebec, namely, those governed by the Canada Labour Code, which allows the use of scabs, and those governed by the Quebec Labour Code, which does not.

Before addressing the fundamental issue, I would be remiss if I did not mention the tremendous efforts of my colleague from Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, who has been rigorously and admirably defending the rights of workers ever since her arrival in the House of Commons in June 2004. I would also like to thank the unions of the Outaouais, especially Dino Lemay and Donald Roy of the Fédération des travailleurs du Québec, or FTQ, Michel Quijada, of the Confédération des syndicats nationaux, or CSN, and Daniel Charron, of the Conseil régional d'action politique de l'Outaouais of the Public Service Alliance of Canada, for their support in this endeavour. I would also like to thank Hassan Yussuf of the Canadian Labour Congress, or CLC, in connection with the tabling of Bill C-257 at first reading on May 4, 2006.

This bill is designed to put an end to the inequity between workers governed by the Quebec Labour Code and those governed by the Canada Labour Code. Only Quebec and British Columbia have

legislation prohibiting the use of scabs. Four provinces, including Ontario, however, already have anti-scab provisions in their labour codes.

Let us recall that Mike Harris's Conservative Ontario government, three of whose ministers may be found in today's federal cabinet, shamefully legalized the use of scabs again.

In Quebec, the adoption of an anti-scab law goes back to December 1977, under René Lévesque's Parti Québécois government. Getting his government to adopt this anti-scab legislation guaranteeing respect for workers was an impressive leap forward.

Coming at the end of a particularly tumultuous strike at the United Aircraft factory in Longueuil, this legislation, by seriously hindering employers who could not care less about their unionized employees, placed Quebec in the North American vanguard in this area.

Anti-scab legislation will be good for all workers, both in Quebec and elsewhere in the provinces and territories.

In New Brunswick, union leaders have already been asking for some time for anti-scab provisions in their labour code. Likewise in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, where the unions are trying to convince their New Democratic governments to adopt such measures.

In federal legislation, section 94(2.1) of the Canada Labour Code contains a prohibition respecting replacement workers, but only if an employer uses them with a view to undermining the union's representational capacity.

This prohibition is very weak, because an employer simply has to go on recognizing the union in place and go on negotiating to avoid undermining the union's representational capacity and it is entitled to use replacement workers.

In other words, if an employer refuses to negotiate while using replacement workers, the Canada Industrial Relations Board can prohibit their use. But all an employer has to do is negotiate or appear to be negotiating with the union to avoid this prohibition and go on using scabs. So we can see that this is a ridiculous provision and provides a loophole allowing the use of scabs.

The prohibition respecting the hiring of replacement workers during a labour dispute is therefore more necessary than ever.

● (1850)

This is why: to diminish picket-line violence, foster a fair balance in the negotiations between employers and employees, reduce the legal proceedings that arise during strikes and lockouts, and mitigate the bitterness felt by employees when they return to work. There is also a very broad consensus among different unions about the importance of antisab legislation. It is essential in the current workplace because it provides greater transparency in case of labour disputes. This bill will not entail any expenditures for the government.

Private Members' Business

With this in mind, the current situation under the Canada Labour Code—allowing the use of replacement workers—means that there are very negative consequences during strikes and lockouts. There are a lot of negative effects, and they alone demonstrate how important it is to bring forward dispute-reduction measures. The premise is that labour disputes last longer when scabs are used. This causes a reduction in the purchasing power of workers directly or indirectly involved in the dispute and results in households going into debt. In some cases, disputes can cause social problems, sometimes very violent, as well as stress-related psychological problems.

To provide a few examples of the benefits of the Quebec legislation, here are figures showing how anticscab legislation could have positive effects on the work climate and the negotiating climate between employers and employees.

In 1976 before anticscab legislation was passed in Quebec, the average number of working days lost was 39.4. In 1979, after the act was passed, the average was 32.8 days, and in 2001 it was 27.4 days. This clearly shows that dispute settlements are quicker and fairer when employers and unions negotiate under the same constraints. The proof is there.

Unfortunately, the Canada Labour Code still allows the use of scabs in Quebec, with the result that there have been labour disputes that demonstrate how urgent it is to pass this bill. Take the case of Vidéotron.

After getting the approval of the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission in May 2001, Quebecor acquired the cable operator Vidéotron with the help of the Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec. In order to clear up some financial problems related to the acquisition, Quebecor undertook a downsizing process shortly thereafter that was supposed to produce annual savings of \$35 to \$40 million in its cable subsidiary.

Some people thought that the confrontation between Quebecor and the 2,200 employees and technicians of the cable company was the last great step in this grand rationalization process.

The 2,200 Vidéotron employees were on strike and locked out from May 8, 2002 until March 2003. The use of replacement workers resulted in many acts of vandalism against Vidéotron facilities.

The same thing happened at Sécur. After 99% of the workers voted against the employer's offers, 900 employees went on strike on July 5, 2002.

When the strike was called, Sécur held 75% of the valuable transport market in Quebec with an annual turnover of \$55 million. For instance, it delivered cash to 1,200 of the 6,000 ATMs in Quebec, a job which was taken over by replacement workers.

The situation deteriorated in late August. Striking Sécur employees vandalized ATMs by spraying them with urethane foam. The dispute ended on October 9, 2002, but not without leaving a very bitter taste in the mouths of everyone concerned.

The long labour disputes at Vidéotron and Sécur had several points in common.

● (1855)

These were lengthy disputes in sectors governed by the Canada Labour Code, where the use of scabs is permitted. The work stoppages at Vidéotron and Sécur were marked by acts of violence and vandalism.

The use of violence and vandalism will never be justified and labour representatives should condemn these acts. Nonetheless, the sense of powerlessness and not seeing an end in sight to the strike or lockout pushes some people to commit serious and illegal acts. This resulted in cables being severed at Vidéotron and ATMs being plugged up with urethane foam at Sécur.

The writing is on the wall. The current Canada Labour Code does not contain the conditions required to allow a true climate of equal negotiations between the employer and the union.

The Bloc Québécois has always been first to defend the workers of Quebec and the rest of Canada. We have tabled a similar bill nine times in order to end the inequity. During the last Parliament, the bill was defeated by only 12 votes at second reading.

Today, anything is possible. During the last election campaign, the Bloc Québécois told its constituents that it was working to improve their living conditions and their quality of life. This was one of my strongest commitments. I call on all hon. members to support this bill in order to make it a priority to improve the living conditions of workers everywhere.

● (1900)

[English]

Ms. Catherine Bell (Vancouver Island North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I also thank the Bloc for bringing forward amendments to the Canada Labour Code to ban the use of replacement workers. The bill has a lot of support in the NDP caucus. In fact, we put forward a similar motion and we hope we can have some discussion on how we can amend the bill to make it even stronger.

I am from British Columbia and the member mentioned in his remarks that British Columbia is one of the provinces that has anti-scab legislation. He probably knows that in 2001 the provincial government opened up the labour code, a labour code that was put in place by labour, business and a then NDP government in pre-2001, that had many good articles for workers.

When the government opened up that bill, it changed a lot of things but it did not change the anti-scab portion of the labour code because it works. We know the use of strikebreakers prolongs labour disputes. We saw that with the recent TELUS dispute. Using strikebreakers also poisons the work atmosphere and it takes many years to get over that. When workers are pitted against one another it puts a strain on the workplace and can cost a lot of money.

I live in a place where the use of strikebreakers has poisoned family relations over a long period of years. Some family members have not spoken to each other for decades because of strikes and the use of some family members as scabs in the mines of Cumberland. If this bill were in place it would eliminate that sort of thing.

This anti-scab bill would be good for workers, good for business and good for the economy. Perhaps the member could expand a little more on the economic benefits derived from the ban on scabs.

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Nadeau: Mr. Speaker, one thing is certain: the simple fact that disputes do not last as long enables employers and employees to reach solutions more quickly.

There is also the issue of security, among others. When the parties negotiate as equals, the workers know that they are on strike and do not have any income. The same holds true for management, for the employers. At that point, the two parties are on an equal footing and the negotiations are transparent.

This also avoids legal action. If the parties are in a position where there is less violence or no violence, where violence is avoided simply because the parties negotiate honestly, then they work to find a solution that suits both sides.

Mr. Luc Harvey (Louis-Hébert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have several questions for my Bloc Québécois colleague. First, he referred to a number of people who were apparently involved in drafting this bill. He spoke only of union representatives. Were people other than union representatives also involved? Did people from the management side have an opportunity to suggest approaches, developments or ways to proceed?

Second, he says that statistics show that disputes do not last as long when there are anti-scab laws. Yet according to the large amount of information I have here, a strike lasts an average of 32 days longer and the risk of a strike is 12% higher as in the case of Nikitin & Baud. I have a lot of other information that does not necessarily corroborate his data. We are talking about people who are very well known in industrial relations, labour relations and union-management relations. Was this information also taken into account when the bill was drafted?

• (1905)

Mr. Richard Nadeau: I thank my hon. colleague, Mr. Speaker. First, in Quebec in 1967, the employers' council never stood in the way of the bill that was passed. One thing is for sure: both on the management side and on the labour side in Quebec, people agree that, ever since the Quebec Labour Code has been in force, there is much greater social peace during labour disputes and strikes than there was before this legislation was passed to ban replacement workers.

One has to try to imagine the scene whenever replacement workers cross picket lines. Simply evoking this is already enough to give rise to feelings of unacceptable conflict. In a civilized society, people who have a dispute to settle have to settle it in the best conditions and with transparency. Both parties must be able to negotiate equitably, using the same set of rules. Then, and only then, the striker does not make any money, but neither does the employer. That way, they can come to an agreement much more quickly than

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when the workers see replacement workers cross their picket lines, ensuring that the employer continues to make money.

That is the kind of situation we want to prevent. We want to create a climate of social peace. In Quebec, the employers' council never questioned Quebec's anti-scab legislation. This was one good thing that was done in Quebec in terms of social peace.

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Labour and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first of all I would like to thank the hon. member for Gatineau and the hon. member for Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert for their commitment in this discussion and in the matter of the antiscab legislation.

This is my first opportunity as Minister of Labour and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec to speak on a private member's bill concerning the department I represent, namely the antiscab legislation we are discussing this evening.

So I am pleased today to have this opportunity to participate in the debate on this important labour policy issue.

Anyone familiar with labour relations in Canada knows how devastating a labour dispute can be, both for the employer and employees and for their families.

It is in that context that we must examine this issue as a whole. Is it better, in fact, to have anti-scab legislation in Canada, or not?

We have to look at things from the national perspective. I remind my colleagues that such a law has existed in Quebec since 1977, and also in British Columbia since 1993. In 29 years, however, only two provinces in Canada have seen fit to bring in antiscab legislation—only two provinces in 29 years.

There is a reason for that. Provinces have considered this unhealthy; they have felt that introducing such a legislation did not create balance in the workplace. Lengthy strikes and lockouts can damage—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn: Mr. Speaker, if I may, I would like to be able to make my presentation without hearing all sorts of comments. I respected the hon. members earlier, and I would also like to be able to provide explanations to those listening to us on television. This debate is important, and it is important that people be familiar with the issues.

So, lengthy strikes and lockouts can do enormous damage to Canadian workers, their families and communities. When they happen, the economy of the country suffers.

Hardworking Canadians want a context in which the rules are fair when a dispute arises with their employer. That is why we have to find the balance—I return to this idea of balance between the rights and responsibilities of employers, unions and employees.

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Part I of the Canada Labour Code offers a solid system of checks and balances which permits all the parties to resolve their disputes in the context they require. It deals with this matter of antiscab legislation. The Labour Code has three parts, with Part II devoted to occupational health and safety and Part III to labour standards.

Banning the use of replacement workers would make the rules of the game unequal.

Bill C-257 would amend the Canada Labour Code by prohibiting all use of replacement workers anywhere in Canada. Prohibiting their use is not the solution.

I have at hand examples of places in Canada where there is antiscab legislation and where disputes have gone on a very long time. I give you the example of the Syndicat des travailleurs de Mine Noranda and the Noranda-Horne smelter, where 500 employees went on strike in June 2002 and stayed on strike for 11 months, despite the antiscab legislation.

The strike at the Société des alcools du Québec, affecting 3,800 employees, began in November 2004 and lasted three months, despite said legislation.

More recently, the strike involving the workers at Laurencio, Moulins Maple Leaf Ltée and the Syndicat des Métallos has gone on for over a year, since March 2, 2005, despite said legislation.

The lockout involving the Lallemand employees and the CSN, which began three months ago, is also still going on.

So I repeat that Bill C-257, which would prevent the use of replacement workers, is not the solution since it would upset the balance.

● (1910)

Moreover, I would like to dispel today the myth that the use of replacement workers prolongs labour disputes. In fact, a recent independent study refuted the idea that the use of replacement workers prolongs disputes or creates violence on the picket lines. The study clearly shows that the fact of prohibiting the use of replacement workers leads to longer labour disputes that are increasingly destabilizing.

These observations discredit the theory that the use of replacement workers gives rise to more frequent and longer strikes in Canada. The opposite is true. Recent studies show that, where there is antiscab legislation, disputes last 32 days longer than where there is no such legislation.

As the members know, labour legislation in Canada was amended not too long ago. The Canada Labour Code was amended in 1999, just seven years ago, in order to modernize our legislation and improve collective bargaining. Every day we can see the advantages of the amendments and improvements made. Furthermore, these amendments were the result of lengthy consultations among stakeholders in the labour world. The exercise included a study conducted by Andy Sims, a former labour board chair.

The question of replacement workers was studied at length and with care at the time of the consultations and the debate in the House of Commons. During the consultations, the workers' and employers' representatives were able to reach agreement on a number of reforms

when the legislation was amended. Still, it quickly became clear that there were two opposing camps on the issue of replacement workers. The members of the Sims task force were also unsuccessful in reaching a consensus on this thorny issue.

The current provisions respecting replacement workers in part I of the Labour Code in a way implement the recommendations that were supported by the majority of the members of the Sims task force. These provisions prohibit the use of replacement workers during a legal work stoppage if such use undermines the union's ability to represent its members. This is regarded as an unfair labour practice. When a representative, employee or member of the union finds that replacement workers were used to undermine their representational capacity, they can file a complaint with the Canada Industrial Relations Board. Then the complaint is analysed immediately by the CIRB.

The current provision is relatively new—it is only seven years old. We are still monitoring its effectiveness. That said, I can assure you that parties undertaking collective bargaining in Canada under part I of the Canada Labour Code have accepted this approach as a reasonable compromise.

We must consider another important principle. Let us go back to the negotiations I mentioned earlier. Some say that the employer's right to lock out employees offsets the union's right to strike, but that is not the case. The employer's right to continue operating during a strike corresponds to the employees' right not to go to work. The current provision in the code aims to balance the interests of both parties.

With respect to strikes, about 97% of all collective agreements under federal jurisdiction renewed in 2005-06 were signed without a work stoppage. This is a clear indicator of the health of our economy and the effectiveness of the code.

In closing, I would like to remind the members that since this legislative provision was adopted by this House in 1999, 18 grievances have been submitted to the Canada Industrial Relations Board. Thirteen were withdrawn, three were rejected, and two are still being examined. This sounds like balance to me.

● (1915)

Although unions are exerting a lot of pressure, I do not think we should respond immediately. We have to consider both sides. That is what happens now under the act adopted in 1999, which creates the best balance between workers, employers and employees.

Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity of presenting arguments to the members of this House I hope will convince some of them to support Bill C-257, an act to amend the Canada Labour Code.

Despite the remarks by the Minister of Labour, I want to congratulate him for coming and presenting his arguments himself or rather his officials' arguments, I should say.

The rights attached to the workplace have always been important to Canadian families. Work is a source of pride and dignity for workers. No one likes being replaced in cavalier fashion. No one likes feeling left out and no one wants to stay on the picket lines for weeks.

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Harmonious relations between workers and employers is also essential. A dragged out dispute poisons relations, slows the return to work and dampens employee enthusiasm. A strike is never desirable, but a strike that becomes confrontation can leave wounds for many years.

For all these reasons and many more, we must support an amendment to the Canada Labour Code to ban the use of replacement workers, or strikebreakers, during strikes and lockouts.

First off, a careful read of the Canada Labour Code reveals the following at the start:

—there is a long tradition in Canada of labour legislation and policy designed for the promotion of the common well-being through the encouragement of free collective bargaining and the constructive settlement of disputes;

The use of strikebreakers or replacement workers is in direct contradiction with the preamble. As I will show, this omission in our Canada Labour Code makes a significant difference in the number of days lost for our workers and for businesses in Canada.

In addition, this bill is fundamentally important because it will serve to protect Canadian workers who come under the Canada Labour Code. It will, most importantly, mean an end to the categorization of Canadian workers, because according to their province or type of work, they may or may not be protected by similar legislation on the use of strikebreakers.

Indeed, this means we have two categories of workers in Canada and that is not acceptable for a country that respects the rule of law. Canada is a defender of human rights internationally, but in its own backyard it has a hard time imposing standard working conditions that are fair to all its workers. This situation is unacceptable.

The purpose of Bill C-257 is to amend the Canada Labour Code by putting an end to the use of replacement workers during strikes or lockouts. There is an important point we must understand. The use of strikes by employees is a legally recognized means to settle a disagreement with the employer, just as lockouts are a recognized means for the employer. The problem is that strikes become meaningless when the employer uses replacement workers. One could say that the employer has an incomparable advantage in the negotiation process. This process, which should be approached on a level playing field, currently gives the advantage to the employer.

What is the advantage? It is being able to hire replacement workers to perform the duties of employees who are on strike or locked out. This situation takes away some of the negotiating power from labour representatives.

This strong bargaining position of the companies undermines the negotiating process with the workers since the use of replacement workers provokes anger on the picket lines, which can lead to violence, especially when buses—often escorted by police—try to cross the picket lines.

In such a context, it is not uncommon for vehicles to hit and injure legally demonstrating union workers. The employer has an unfair advantage in dragging out the negotiations since it makes a profit on the lower salaries it pays the replacement workers.

This situation contributes to diminishing the capacity of the striking workers to reach a negotiated agreement that responds fairly to their claims.

• (1920)

Consequently, replacing workers who are defending their rights on the picket line does not bode well for harmonious future labour relations between the parties.

Including a provision in the Canada Labour Code to prohibit the use of scabs would prevent work disruptions that are needlessly long or even simply needless in vital sectors of Canada's economy.

For purposes of comparison, 93% of workers in Quebec are covered by Quebec's labour legislation. Consequently, there is no reason why 7% of workers in Quebec should not be covered by the Canada Labour Code. There cannot be two classes of citizens in Canada. As well, statistics show that having an anti-scab law helps reduce the number of days lost because of labour disputes, despite what our colleague from Louis-Hébert said. The average work time lost from 1992 to 2002 is 15.9 days for workers who come under the Quebec Labour Code and 31.1 days for workers subject to the Canada Labour Code. That represents a difference of 95.6% in days of work lost. Those lost days represent a lot of money for companies and for Canadian workers.

Another interesting statistic justifies an amendment to the Canada Labour Code. In 2002, even though workers under federal jurisdiction made up 6.6% of the labour force in Quebec, they accounted for 48% of the days lost because of labour disputes. Third, the number of days lost per 1,000 employees from 1999 to 2002 is 121.3 for workers covered by the Quebec Labour Code, compared to 266.3 for workers subject to the Canada Labour Code. This is a huge difference: 145 more days of work lost. It can be attributed largely to the use of scabs.

Of course, Quebec is not the only province with such a labour law. As was mentioned earlier, British Columbia passed a similar law in 1993, which reduced strike days to levels comparable to those in Quebec. It also resulted in a 50% drop in the ratio of time lost. Similar anti-scab legislation is producing remarkable results.

Ontario adopted anti-scab legislation in 1992, but scrapped it a few years later following a change in government. Despite the rhetoric spouted by opponents, there were fewer work stoppages, union demands were more moderate and there was less agitation on picket lines during the period in which this legislation was in effect.

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I would now like to give a specific, although not unique, example: Vidéotron in Quebec, which my colleague from Gatineau has already mentioned. We could not forget this labour dispute that lasted more than 10 months. The dispute affected more than 2,200 employees of the cable company, who were on strike or locked out from May 2002 to March 2003. This long labour dispute deteriorated and one of the major causes of the deterioration was the use of scabs. Because of the company's action, people committed acts of vandalism to company property. If such a law had been in effect, that vandalism likely would not have taken place, since frustrations would not have mounted so high.

I could give other examples. We need only think of the recent labour disputes involving CBC, TELUS, Sécur Desjardins, Cargill and Radio-Nord. These disputes illustrate the damage that can be caused by the lack of such protection within our labour legislation.

We must bear in mind the human factor, above all, in this legislation. Yes, this factor must be considered, because the feeling of not being respected by an employer who chooses to use scabs undermines the morale of workers. Depending on the length of the dispute, this can lead to family problems and household debt that could have been avoided.

Of course, I could go on at length, for several hours even. It is the government's duty to implement measures to ensure that the atmosphere of labour relations is fair and equal across Canada.

In conclusion, anti-scab legislation is crucial, because it will allow for greater transparency and fairness in the resolution of labour disputes. This is why I rose to speak in the House today, to defend the interests of all Canadian workers.

• (1925)

I ask the House to promote the well-being of our citizens at work by supporting Bill C-257.

[*English*]

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise in the House today as the labour critic for the NDP to speak in support of the bill put forward by the Bloc Québécois. We are very happy that this bill is in the House. Indeed, I seconded the bill, as did many of my colleagues in the NDP. As the member from the Bloc has said, this is a repeat effort to bring this very important issue forward in Parliament to ensure that the rights of workers are secured in this country where they are federally regulated.

I want to say on behalf of the NDP we understand that freedom of association, collective bargaining and the right to strike are fundamental labour rights in Canada. In fact, these are hard won rights that historically workers have died for in some cases. The issue in the bill we are debating today is fundamental and central to the rights of workers in Canada, and that is the use of strikebreakers.

Labour rights are a human right. Workers have the right to withhold their services if collective bargaining fails. Fair wages, a safe workplace, pay equity, health care and pensions are all hard fought achievements of the labour movement and collective bargaining. However, there is still a glaring omission, and that is that there is no adequate federal provision to ensure that the use of replacement workers or strikebreakers is banned in this country.

I heard the Minister of Labour earlier today raise the question as to whether this proposed bill is good. Yes or no, he asked. He went on to point out that workers want to have rules that are fair. He said that we need to strike a balance between the rights of employers and the rights of unions. I have to ask the minister, is it fair when members of a union have legally gone on strike, they should have their right to strike completely undermined by the use of strikebreakers? I do not think this is a fair situation whatsoever. There is nothing balanced about that. There is nothing that is balanced in the favour of workers.

In fact, the provisions presently in the Canada Labour Code are very inadequate. If they were adequate, we would not be debating this bill today.

We have to be very clear that we are dealing with the fundamental issue of the rights of workers and the fact that when workers go on a legal strike, they have an expectation and a right to assume that the rules will be fair and balanced. We believe it is very important that federal legislation affecting workers under federal jurisdiction acknowledge the right to expect that strikebreakers will not be allowed.

We have already heard that in British Columbia and Quebec this legislation is working in the provincial jurisdictions. We can point out very clearly that when legislation like this is in place, we actually see an environment that produces labour stability. The government in British Columbia is not a progressive government. It is a centre right government, yet it understands that this provision in the B.C. labour code is something it would not dare touch because it has brought stability to the workplace in British Columbia.

By contrast, the very nasty TELUS labour dispute and the lockout of TELUS workers went on month after month in B.C. This was a huge issue. One of the reasons it went on for so long is that those workers were under federal regulation and there was nothing to protect them from the use of strikebreakers, contracting out and out sourcing jobs. It made the strike go on much longer.

There is also the example of Vidéotron in Quebec. There is the example of the CBC. I would add another one.

Last weekend I was very fortunate to travel to Yellowknife to participate with members of PSAC and the Union of Northern Workers who have now been on strike for about 60 days against a huge multinational corporation, BHP, which has refused to negotiate in good faith. One of the big issues in that strike in Yellowknife is the use of contractors, which really are replacement workers or strikebreakers.

• (1930)

Again we see an example where workers have legally gone on strike. In this case they are trying very hard to get a first collective agreement. They are up against a massive multinational corporation, the Australian BHP Billiton that had worldwide profits of \$7.5 billion in 2005. This is a very powerful corporation. What tools do these workers have to ensure that they get a fair collective agreement if they are constantly being undermined in their right to strike by the use of what the employer calls contractors but in effect are strikebreakers?

That is a very recent example of where if there were adequate provisions in the Canada Labour Code for federally regulated workers, we would be protecting the rights of those workers at the diamond mine in the Northwest Territories. I want to congratulate the member for Western Arctic for the strong stand he has taken to uphold these very fundamental rights of the members of the Union of Northern Workers, Local 3050. They are taking on a very difficult struggle.

I would love to be able to say that this legislation is going to go through so that we can ensure that the kind of situation that is taking place in that strike in the Northwest Territories does not have to be repeated in any other situation where federal regulation occurs.

I want to make one other point. Clearly, 100% of the members of the NDP will be supporting Bill C-257. In fact, I mentioned Bill C-295 earlier which is our own bill against strikebreaking. The member for Vancouver Island North has brought that bill forward. We will be debating that bill also. We want Bill C-257 to go to committee. We want discussions to take place to strengthen the bill. The Canadian Labour Congress has a very intensive campaign under way. The NDP will be participating in that campaign. I want to say that we are going to get this bill through.

It was such a huge disappointment and quite appalling that in the last Parliament virtually the same bill was lost by less than a dozen votes. Members in the House had better be aware that there will be a very active campaign undertaken on this bill for anti-scab legislation.

I heard the member from the Liberal Party. Of course the Bloc will support the bill because it is the Bloc's bill. The NDP will support the bill. There were Conservative members in the last Parliament who supported the bill. We are hoping very much that members of the Liberal caucus will also support this bill.

We have this opportunity in this Parliament to actually do something that will make a real difference in the lives of workers and protect their rights. Passage of the bill would actually produce a stability and a benefit for the whole community and the economy.

We are very glad that this issue is before the House today. We want Bill C-257 to go through as quickly as possible. We want to encourage individual members of Parliament to be open to factual, objective information, instead of taking an ideological position. We want members to look at this bill on its real merits and how it actually supports labour management industrial relations stability. That is the evidence that is before us, despite what the Minister of Labour told us today.

This type of legislation has been in effect in Quebec since 1977. It has been in effect in British Columbia since 1993. It has actually helped to produce stability. If we can manage to get this bill through the House for those workers under federal jurisdiction, then we should be leading the way to say to other provinces that they should be bringing in similar legislation at the provincial level.

In closing, the NDP is happy this bill is being debated. I would encourage members to support the bill. The bill is very important. We want this bill to be enacted and have a majority of support in the House. We were so close the last time. We want to make sure that the bill passes this time and goes to committee so that we can have a discussion. We can look at amendments, but to support the bill in

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principle is something that is very important. The NDP caucus will support the bill 100%.

• (1935)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak on this anti-strikebreaking bill, but at the same time, it makes me somewhat uncomfortable to have to address this issue once again. This is not the first time that the Bloc Québécois brings in a bill to protect the rights of workers. As far as I am concerned, that issue should have been resolved years ago.

I will clarify one point for the benefit of the labour minister. First, the Minister of Labour is from a riding with the greatest number of unionized workers in Canada, if I am not mistaken. I would just like to respond briefly to the minister. The studies cited by the minister were commissioned by right-wing organizations. Any study by the Montreal Economic Institute or the Fraser Institute invariably tends to support the interests of management and to back the employers. Also, the study on the duration of labour disputes was based on figures from 1967 to 1993. Talk about old figures. These were provided by very large corporations, but no SMEs. As we know, however, Quebec's economy is more SME based. In a word, these studies have to be taken with a grain of salt.

At this point, I would also like to introduce some statistics. The average number of work days lost in Quebec, between 1992 and 2002, by workers governed by the Quebec Labour Code was 15.9 days. The average for those governed by the Canada Labour Code was 31.1 days, or almost double.

Between 1992 and 2002—these are recent figures—in Quebec, the number of days lost per 1,000 employees governed by the Quebec Labour Code was 121.3 days; for those governed by the Canada Labour Code, 266.3 days were lost. That is substantial.

Therefore, all arguments are in favour of adopting this bill as soon as possible.

This anti-scab legislation will prohibit the use of strikebreakers or replacement workers during a labour dispute. The objective of the bill is to harmonize the provisions of the Canada Labour Code and the Quebec Labour Code.

We know that Quebec has had anti-scab legislation since 1977. There is no question that Quebec's legislation has helped Quebec move forward in terms of labour relations, in addition to reducing the duration of labour disputes, curbing violence during strikes and lockouts and, particularly, improving the working environment. It is not easy going through a strike or lockout. I will not add any other arguments as they were presented by my colleague from Gatineau.

The adoption of anti-scab measures will put an end to the existence of two categories of workers: workers falling under Quebec jurisdiction and workers in companies under federal jurisdiction.

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At present, federal regulations are inadequate. Everyone agrees. The very vague provisions of the Canada Labour Code limit the use of strikebreakers, but this is by no means enough. The Bloc Québécois tabled a petition with over 46,000 signatures supporting the position of workers and calling on the government to adopt measures that will prohibit the use of replacement workers.

• (1940)

At the moment, only British Columbia and Quebec have legislative measures preventing the use of strikebreakers. Four provinces, including Ontario, have had anti-strikebreaking measures in their respective labour codes.

However, there was a strong consensus among the various unions about anti-strikebreaking measures, in the case of employees under provincial jurisdiction and for those under federal jurisdiction.

Anti-strikebreaking legislation is essential in the work world of today because it truly recognizes the workers' right to strike and establishes a better balance between employees and employers.

In New Brunswick, the union leaders have for awhile been calling for additional anti-strikebreaking measures in their provincial labour code. The same thing is happening in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, where the unions are trying to convince their governments to adopt such measures.

In recent years, certain strikes and lockouts have led to an upsurge in violence by employees facing replacement workers. We need only think of the 2,200 Vidéotron workers, who, after replacement workers were hired in a dispute in 2002, committed acts of vandalism against Vidéotron facilities.

All of these disputes—for there have been many of them—have several points in common. In all cases, they were long disputes in sectors where the workers are governed by the Canada Labour Code and where the use of strikebreakers is permitted.

The Vidéotron dispute lasted over 10 months; the Sécour dispute, three months; and the Cargill dispute, 38 months. Finally, at Radio-Nord work stopped for 20 months.

Half of these labour disputes were marked by acts of vandalism and violence. I want to be clear that recourse to violence and vandalism is never justified, and must be condemned by workers' representatives in no uncertain terms. However, the feeling of being powerless and of not seeing the end of the strike or lockout inevitably drives some workers to reprehensible and illegal acts. For the Bloc Québécois, this is a worrisome situation which finds its solution in the measure proposed today, this anti-strikebreaker bill.

Since 1995, the Bloc Québécois has been trying to get a bill passed that would prevent the hiring of individuals to replace striking or locked out employees in companies governed by the Canada Labour Code and striking employees in the federal public service. If the Bloc Québécois, supported by the largest labour federations in Quebec and Canada, continues to fight for the passage of such a bill, it is because action is urgently needed to amend the federal labour code as quickly as possible and mitigate all the negative effects of a strike or lockout.

In conclusion, I will recall a few figures of which I spoke earlier. We have seen there is a very high average in the case of employees governed by the Canada Labour Code, and a much lower average in the case of employees governed by the Quebec Labour Code.

• (1945)

I will close by saying that this bill would put an end to two categories of workers: those governed by the Quebec Labour Code and those governed by the Canada Labour Code.

The Deputy Speaker: The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the order paper.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[*English*]

TOURISM INDUSTRY

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to rise to speak about an issue that is very important for this country. It is in regard to economics and also in regard to my constituency and many others that are dependent upon the tourism trade.

It is also important to Americans and concerns the western hemisphere travel initiative. The introduction of passports for entry to and exit from the United States, not only for Americans and Canadians, will have significant economic impacts on our economy and trade.

Currently, the government has failed to put forth a plan on how it is going to deal with tourism. When I rose in the House of Commons, I agreed with the government that the previous Liberal administration had done nothing on that file. We heard a number of comments from the government side from a series of ministers, blaming the previous administration. However, it is not enough to criticize the previous Liberal government. We must have a plan. That has not happened yet.

Interestingly enough, the first question that was answered by the Minister of Public Safety said this of the Liberals: "They broke faith with Canadians in not taking action on this file".

Subsequent to that, in a supplementary question, I talked about the NDP being asked for ideas by the Prime Minister. We actually did table a tourism strategy, one that deals with requesting expectations from the United States in terms of amelioration and the effects of the implementation of the WHTI.

For example, the American ambassador continues to talk about the documents the Americans want to have at the end of the day as being a work in progress. With a looming deadline, not knowing what the documents are and having no money to fund that process is a serious problem.

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Second, we called for the extension of Canadian passports from 5 to 10 years, reducing the fee for seniors, and having them free for veterans. We also spoke about a national tourism strategy with the provinces and the municipalities to clear the air about what is going on right now. We see from Statistics Canada a continued decline of American tourism in Canada.

Interestingly enough, the Minister of Industry responded. He is responsible for this file in terms of tourism. He had previously declined many opportunities to discuss this in this chamber. He responded by actually blaming the previous administration and said, "This is a lot more than what was allocated in the previous Liberal Party budget".

The problem with this issue is that the member for Vancouver Kingsway was the previous industry minister responsible for this file. He sat with the Liberals at the time. He crossed the floor and now he sits with the Conservatives. Quite frankly, the Minister of Industry probably has breakfast with the Minister of International Trade, who now sits with him in caucus and blamed him for not doing enough.

We just cannot have the blame game any more. We must have a plan. Why can the Minister of Industry not extract what the Minister of International Trade was going to do on this file? Why did he do nothing? Why will he not table a plan in the House of Commons because people will lose their jobs this summer?

• (1950)

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise in response to the question put to the House by my colleague, the member for Windsor West, regarding the United States western hemisphere travel initiative. The member has in the past raised the issue of the need for a strategy to address the potential impact that this initiative may have on Canadians should it be implemented as it was set out in the law passed by Congress. The government has been clear in its strategy of advocacy with our American counterparts and also on implementing new measures such as the more than \$400 million recently allocated to border security issues in budget 2006.

These are solid planks in a strategy that is making progress on this issue, but more is being done. Shortly the government will launch a new website dedicated to dealing with the western hemisphere travel initiative. This website will communicate important and timely information directly to Canadians to ensure that they are fully aware of the situation and the requirements for travel. The government is making every effort to ensure that Canadians have the information they need to make informed decisions, such as what documents they can use now to travel to the United States and what is being done to facilitate and enhance cross-border travel and trade.

Today for example, Canadians need to know that they can continue to cross the border with documents that convey identity and nationality data such as driver's licences and birth certificates. They can also enter each country using their NEXUS, FAST and Air NEXUS program membership. Canadians can also use their passport, one of the most secure documents of its kind in the world and one that will be accepted even after any new documentary requirements are implemented.

The Government of Canada recognizes and shares the U.S. commitment to a secure border. Both countries are working collaboratively to develop a plan to implement the WHTI in a manner that addresses the threat of terrorism while facilitating the flow of legitimate travellers and goods across our shared border. It is one of the most important bilateral border issues facing Canada and the United States at this time.

The potential impact of the WHTI is now well established our country, but more work has to be done in the U.S. We continue to call for more economic impact studies south of the border as we believe the effects upon the U.S., particularly the northern border states, will be even more pronounced in terms of real costs.

The message is being heard. Recently at a one day conference on international issues in Gimli, Manitoba, a number of high ranking officials from both Canada and the U.S. voiced their concerns. The Prime Minister attended this event and assured Canadians that this continued to be a priority for this government. He also made the case for Canada's position in Cancun at the Security and Prosperity Partnership leaders summit. He will continue this frank and open discussion with President Bush in Washington in July.

The Minister of Public Safety and the Minister of Foreign Affairs have held productive consultations with their American counterparts. The U.S. government recognizes our commitment to resolve this issue on behalf of Canadians while respecting the security concerns of Congress. In fact, the U.S. Secretary of State recently remarked that the U.S. is very comfortable with border security cooperation from Canada.

The government is making good progress on this issue and this is being recognized. We are not complacent now and we will continue to work to preserve our historic, unique cross-border relationship with the U.S.

• (1955)

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, it is incredible that we are still at this point in time. The Minister of International Trade, who the current government blamed for not doing anything, previously sat with the Liberal administration. I asked him back in April 7, 2005, to take some active steps. What do we have right now? We have a website that will be put in place as a solution. I do not know when that will happen, however.

We can have meetings, recommendations and all those things. That even is happening outside the government. The premiers recently expressed their concern about our current situation and the fact that the federal government had to get involved. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities expressed how important it was. Everyone has been expressing it, but the federal minister responsible for tourism has to come up with a plan and a website is not a plan.

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It is not sufficient. We know people are going to lose their jobs this summer. First, there is going to be a decrease in trade because the dollar is escalating right now. Second, there is absolute, utter confusion out there about the requirement of a passport because of misinformation. The Minister of Industry has been missing in action on this file. When will they table a plan in the House of Commons so we can get some real action? A website is not enough.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Mr. Speaker, this government has been extremely active in working with the Americans to come up with mutually acceptable solutions to enhance border security without harming tourism and trade.

Over the past 100 days, the government has worked hard to stand up for the interests of Canadians on this matter. The Prime Minister has established a constructive dialogue with President Bush on border issues and the President has acknowledged that his government is looking at solutions that address Canada's concerns.

The Minister of Public Safety has held discussions with his counterpart, as has the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Our ambassador has made this his top priority, after helping to solve the softwood lumber issue. Numerous meetings have been held with senior White House, administration and state officials.

These efforts are paying off. Already a number of positive developments suggest that there may be greater flexibility on this issue, including the possibility of a delay. There are no guarantees that recent efforts to alter the course of this law will be successful. That is why the government will continue to press its case with the U.S. government and why it will continue to work tirelessly on behalf of all Canadians.

The Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24 (1).

(The House adjourned at 7:58 p.m.)

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