



CANADA

House of Commons Debates

VOLUME 141 • NUMBER 108 • 1st SESSION • 39th PARLIAMENT

OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Monday, February 12, 2007

—
Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

CONTENTS

(Table of Contents appears at back of this issue.)

Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the following address:

<http://www.parl.gc.ca>

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, February 12, 2007

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1105)

[*English*]

BRAIN TUMOUR SURVEILLANCE

The House resumed from December 12 consideration of the motion.

Mr. Lui Temelkovski (Oak Ridges—Markham, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, not only is cancer is an important health issue facing Canadians, it is a crucial issue. Each and every Canadian is somehow touched by this awful disease.

It is one that hits particularly close to home for me. Both of my parents died from cancer. My father Naum was just 60 years old when he passed away and my mother Zorka was 70.

I want to commend the hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley for bringing this motion to the floor of the House of Commons. I know that the hon. member has been in the House for a long time and he has always had the best interests of his constituents at heart. I understand that this motion was prompted by actual cases in his Nova Scotia riding. I also know that the member had a cancer scare last year himself. We are certainly all happy that it was caught early. I pass along my best wishes to him for continued excellent health.

In preparing for this debate this morning, I looked at some recent statistics on brain cancer. Each year approximately 10,000 Canadians are diagnosed with a primary or metastatic brain tumour. While no type of cancer is pleasant, brain cancer is particularly devastating, as the brain tumours are located in the individual's centre of thought, emotion and movement. All of our bodily processes start in and emanate from the brain, making the results of brain cancer particularly devastating.

Cancer is a tricky and unpredictable disease. Sometimes it is hard to know what is really going on because statistics and findings seem to change so very often. Often we get contradictory information.

We do know that it is a devastating condition. It is time for us to come together and find a solution. We must do what we can to reduce cancer's effects.

It might be idealistic to think we can eradicate cancer, but let us consider the outstanding achievements of humankind.

We have put people on the moon and we have sent specialized vehicles to Mars that sent back data for analysis. We have instantaneous communication on handheld devices.

What I am saying is that if we can do all of that, then surely to goodness there is more we can do to fight cancer. It is the equalizer and does not discriminate. The hon. member's motion is hopefully a good start down this road.

The Canadian Alliance of Brain Tumour Organizations tells us there is no national mechanism or standard for the collection of both malignant and benign brain tumour data. The alliance has a particular concern that jurisdictions in Canada seem to be reporting only the malignant cases.

We have must have a better understanding of the actual numbers to accurately reflect the impact of this awful disease on Canadians and their families.

At first glance, the motion seems to be self-evident. After all, since we all live in the same country, why would we not share as much information as we can and establish national standards? At times, the realities of the Canadian federation make this a challenge.

Therefore, I am very pleased with the wording of the motion. It calls upon the government to work with its provincial and territorial partners, advocacy groups and other stakeholders to obtain timely and accurate data. We have to work together, not only because health care is a shared jurisdiction, but because we all have a stake in this and a role to play in reducing the incidence and effects of this disease. Perhaps this will be the start of better coordination to come.

There are other things that we can all do as well. There is more that government can do and there is more that we can do as individuals.

Obesity rates are increasing, most worrisomely among children. We must all strive to lead healthier lifestyles, exercising more and eating better. All members have the Canada Food Guide that was distributed to our offices just last week. It is important that Canadians get this nutritional information and take it seriously.

A national pharmaceutical strategy is most important to all Canadians and especially to those living with disease. I fully support such a strategy, as it is part of my belief that we cannot let Canadians down when they need prescription medications and when they most need help.

Private Members' Business

To me, a national pharmaceutical strategy goes hand in hand with the universal health care system. At the first ministers meeting in September 2004, leaders committed to the development and implementation of the national pharmaceutical strategy. All governments, with important and necessary leadership from the federal government, must continue to work toward this as soon as possible.

I hear from my constituents on this matter. I hear stories of people who are facing debilitating high drug costs. There has to be a better way.

The next point related to the motion on brain cancer is discussion on wait times. It goes without saying that the earlier the cancer is caught and the earlier it is treated, the better it is for the patient, both in terms of quality of life and for prospects for survival.

A wait times guarantee was of course one of the main priorities of the Prime Minister. I am concerned that the government has not yet come through on this important election promise of a wait times guarantee for Canadians.

There have been a couple of piecemeal announcements that serve mostly to make the government appear to be taking action. What is really needed is a comprehensive national plan, with the support of the provinces and territories.

On Friday the health minister met with his provincial and territorial counterparts in Toronto to discuss medical procedure wait times. I recognize that this is not an easy issue to address. I am pleased that all sides met and that everyone is talking, but Canadians want to see results. Why can the minister not provide timelines for this?

I know that the minister said the meeting was a chance to get some of the issues out there and to talk them through, but I do not think it is unreasonable on the part of Canadians to expect some sort of timeline from the minister. It is important to bear in mind that it was his party that made the commitment in the first place. The Conservatives owe it to Canadians to follow through in a timely fashion and to keep them up to date on progress.

I believe we are at the point where there is a real chance for change and for better health care for Canadians from coast to coast.

In September 2004 first ministers came together and decided to tackle the challenges of health care head on. The result was an unprecedented agreement, a \$41.3 billion agreement with the provinces and territories to enhance Canada's health care system for the next decade. An agreement on this scale proves that the will is there.

The Prime Minister and the Minister of Health must build on this success. Real potential exists to see further improvements in our health system and to realize such things as wait time guarantees and catastrophic drug coverage.

• (1110)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois recognizes the dramatic impact cancer has. Each of us has relatives who have been touched by cancer. My father died of cancer.

My grandmother and several of my cousins developed breast cancer, which affects many women.

In Quebec, cancer is the leading cause of death, ahead of cardiovascular disease. However, the Bloc Québécois is opposed to the development of a so-called national cancer prevention strategy and uniform guidelines by the federal government. The situation in Quebec is different from the situation in the provinces. As a result, Quebec must be able to take measures tailored to Quebecers' needs. And that is what Quebec is doing. Since 1998, Quebec has had a cancer control program and the Conseil québécois de la lutte contre le cancer, which shares information, something that this motion in the House calls for. Such measures are already in place in Quebec.

I find it hard to believe that, on February 12, 2007, there is so little knowledge of or respect for Quebec's position that a Conservative member introduced this motion and the Conservative PMO allowed it. This is a blatant example of how the Conservatives talk out of both sides of their mouths. Yet in a speech he gave in Montreal as recently as April 21, 2006, the Prime Minister boasted about open federalism, stating, "Open federalism means respecting areas of provincial jurisdiction, keeping the federal government's spending power within bounds—".

In the same vein, the then Minister of Health stated, with reference to guaranteed wait times, that we have to respect provincial jurisdictions, even if it takes a little more time to get things done.

The motion introduced today says the opposite of what the Prime Minister and his Minister of Health said. It is no wonder many Quebecers distrust the Conservatives and lack confidence in them. They keep talking out of both sides of their mouths.

Do I have to remind the members that health care falls exclusively within the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces? Quebec has the necessary expertise and knows how to allocate its resources to fight cancer and other diseases and health problems effectively. Quebec can harmonize its priorities to minimize confusion and waste. Quebec owns and manages the institutions that provide services to citizens. I am referring to hospitals and local community service centres. The Government of Quebec works with other Quebec ministries, including the ministry of health, to promote healthier lifestyles. The Government of Quebec is closest to the people; it can find out what people want and can run campaigns to promote various preventive strategies that will have a broader impact. I am thinking of Quebec's smoking cessation campaign, which has proven its worth year after year. The "Quit to win" challenge was a huge success again in 2006. The campaign's enduring popularity proves that Quebecers want to take charge of their health. Over the past seven years, over 220,000 people have signed up for the challenge.

Program duplication is expensive. Quebec already has its own policies for cancer prevention, policies that were developed together with health care stakeholders, who are used to the existing framework. Developing nationwide standards and directives would be a costly duplication of what is already in place. Moreover, such encroachment on Quebec's jurisdiction is frustrating and confusing.

As the Bloc Québécois critic for intergovernmental affairs, I would like to remind the House that the fiscal imbalance between the federal government and the provinces is due in part to the federal government's pointless expenditures, especially when it abuses its fiscal power to encroach on Quebec's jurisdiction.

According to an excellent study coordinated by Jacques Léonard and published in January 2004, Health Canada's operating expenses rose by 78% over the previous five years.

• (1115)

I suggest that the current government ensure that such loss of control is corrected. Make sure that such revolting extremes never happen again. Do that instead of interfering in Quebec's business and jurisdiction.

In 1991, the Treasury Board, a major federal department, indicated that such duplication created confusion regarding the responsibilities of each government, contradictory objectives, major coordination costs, a heavy burden on citizens, and even economic distortions. This study estimated that 66% of federal programs duplicated provincial ones. The Bloc opposes the lack of respect toward Quebec's jurisdictions. This lack of respect comes across loud and clear in the motion before us today.

Let us also talk about the costs of the Canada-wide data processing systems. One administrative aspect of this motion brings back bad memories for me. The purpose of this motion is to create standards and directives through data collection, analyses and reports. We certainly hope there will not be another data processing nightmare. We know how scandalously the gun registry exceeded its estimated costs.

We also remember that the minister responsible for social insurance cards had a great deal of difficulty managing the data bank for those cards. At the end of the last century, we witnessed tremendous public displeasure when, among other things, the confidentiality of personal data was threatened by social insurance number cards. The Office of the Auditor General had to get involved.

Furthermore, I am not the only one asking the government to respect Quebec's jurisdictions. In 2005, Premier Jean Charest had this to say about the federal health minister's comments:

The day-to-day management of the health care network and health services delivery is our responsibility. And it would be a good idea for the federal government not to interfere in how we provide health care. In fact it would be a very bad idea for the federal government to stick its nose in how we provide health care services.

In closing, if the federal government is sincere about its desire to diminish the stress caused by cancer, then it should transfer money directly to Quebec and to the provinces so that they can fund their own programs.

• (1120)

[*English*]

Mr. Gord Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the creation of uniform national standards and guidelines for the surveillance of all malignant and benign brain tumours has the potential to improve the quality and completeness of brain tumour registration across Canada.

Private Members' Business

Complete and accurate data on primary brain tumours will facilitate research into the causes of this disease, which may lead to improved diagnosis and treatment of patients. Currently, published statistics usually include malignant tumours only.

Benign tumours are slow growing and do not invade important structures, while malignant tumours are fast growing and may invade and damage important structures.

Nevertheless, for improved cancer surveillance, it is worthwhile for cancer registries to collect and report standardized information on benign brain tumours since they result in similar symptoms and outcomes as malignant tumours.

Ideally, data collection by cancer registries should include all tumours of the central nervous system.

Cancer registries have been created in each of the provinces and territories but the sources of data and relevant legislation varies.

In addition to provincial-territorial registries, a central Canadian cancer registry is maintained at Statistics Canada that includes selective data from each of the provincial and territorial registries.

Cancer registries serve several purposes by linking available resources of administrative data to obtain information on the number of new cancer cases and corresponding patient follow-up information. This information allows basic surveillance and establishes a platform to provide the additional information needed to develop and evaluate cancer control programs.

Current users of cancer registries include linkages to other administrative databases, such as vital statistics, to further assess potential causes of cancer, such as behavioural risk factors, as well as occupational and environmental exposures.

A total of 2,500 cases and 1,650 deaths from malignant brain and nervous system cancer are expected in 2006 in Canada. The number of brain and nervous system cases registered would be increased by around 40% to 70% if benign cases were included.

Based on the underlying cause reported on death certificates, the number of deaths would be increased by about 30% when benign and uncertain brain tumours are included. Benign cases contribute a substantial proportion of the total burden of brain cancer.

The inclusion of benign brain tumours in standard data collection and the adoption of standard site and histology definitions for tabulating benign brain tumours is needed to incorporate these tumours fully into the Canadian cancer registry and allow comparability of information across registries and internationally.

Including non-malignant brain tumours in the Canadian cancer registry is also needed to allow these tumours to be studied fully, including an evaluation of the trends and the rates of newly diagnosed cases for this type of cancer. It will be necessary to report and analyze data for non-malignant central nervous tumours separately from malignant tumours.

Private Members' Business

By including data on these two tumour types in the registries, it will be available for use in analytic epidemiology research studies that will help identify factors that influence the risk for developing malignant and non-malignant brain tumours.

Another reason why it is important to include benign brain tumours in registration is that there is a large number of sub-types of brain and nervous system cancer.

The chance of recovery prognosis and choice of treatment depend on the type, grade and location of the tumour and whether cancer cells remain after surgery and/or have spread to other parts of the brain. For example, survival rates are generally higher for benign meningiomas than for malignant meningiomas but the treatment of benign tumours may be limited by their location.

Favourably situated lesions are usually amenable to complete removal by surgery, while other types are more difficult to fully and safely excise.

Reporting of benign brain cancer is expected to increase the total overall number of reported cancer cases by about 1%. There would be some implications for registries to this added reporting, including some modest costs, the need for training and database upgrades and possibly revisions in legislation.

• (1125)

Registries may also need access to additional sources of administrative data to ensure that cases not included in current sources are captured. For example, when cases are not hospitalized shortly after diagnosis, access to other data sources, such as pathology records or physician claims data, becomes more important.

Completeness of reporting is critical for cancer registries. Accurate case counts are necessary to assess the burden of cancer, to guide cancer control program planning, to prioritize the allocation of health resources and to facilitate epidemiological research. This is a particular challenge for registries with access to limited sources of administrative data.

Cancer registry information is continually being enhanced with data relevant to these programs. For example, stage data: the extent of disease at the time of diagnosis was not collected when cancer registration was initiated.

However, currently there is a collaborative initiative between the cancer registries, Statistics Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada to collect cancer stage data at the time of diagnosis. Stage information is necessary to better describe and evaluate cancer survival and cancer control programs. Other data enhancements are being considered to fill the information gap between diagnosis and death.

In addition to adding cancer stage data to the cancer registries, current priorities for enhanced cancer surveillance under exploration with provinces, territories and cancer stakeholders are the collection of radiation and other treatment data: treatment access, treatment outcome, improved record linkages and consideration of privacy legislation.

These ongoing enhancements of the cancer registries will also benefit the study of both benign and malignant brain tumours. For example, studies have demonstrated that some benign brain cancers transform to malignant tumours. To understand the factors that might contribute to this transformation and whether incidence rates for both malignant and non-malignant tumours are affected, the full spectrum of the disease needs to be included in cancer registries.

In the area of enhanced surveillance of cancer control interventions, it will take some time to see the impact, especially some of those that require primary prevention intervention relatively early in life. That creates a need for the registry to capture another class of indicators of potential success or process measures, that is a measure which is not sufficient in itself to prove the efficacy of the intervention, but one that is on the pathway to effective prevention, such as reduction in smoking prevalence or on the pathway to effective screening, such as reduction in the absolute prevalence of advanced cancer, or on the pathway to effective treatment, such as prolongation of disease free survival.

Knowing more about the risks for brain cancer and its evolution and impact across a lifetime is particularly important because brain cancer is a significant cancer among young adults. In 2003 there were 388 cases diagnosed within the 20 to 44 age group, or close to 20% of brain cancer cases among Canadians aged 20 or older.

Five years after diagnosis, 23% of patients diagnosed with malignant brain tumours during 1995 to 1997 were alive, compared to the expected survival of persons the same age in the Canadian population. Survival for benign tumours is better with a relative survival rate of 70% is to be expected.

Teams can be made up of physicians, neurosurgeons, nurses, pharmacists, radiation oncologists, neuro-oncologists, dietitians, therapists and/or social workers.

It is clear that for Canadian cancer registries to provide the most complete information for brain tumours, data on both benign and malignant tumours needs to be collected. I ask all hon. members to join me in commending the member for introducing the motion and to give it their full support.

Mr. Rick Dykstra (St. Catharines, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to private member's Motion No. 235.

As many of the speakers have noted, it is next to impossible for any of us not to have had personal experience with members of our family being diagnosed with cancer and having to work through those issues. I am no different; my father suffers from it right now. All of us should commend the member for putting forward this motion which starts to at least pay attention to some of the issues that we need to address with respect to this disease. I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak in support of this extremely important motion.

Private Members' Business

Each year in Canada over 200 children and youth under 20 years of age are diagnosed with a malignant brain tumour and nearly 60 die from their disease. Brain tumours are the most common solid tumour in children and youth and account for approximately one-fifth of all cancers diagnosed and 25% of all children's cancer deaths.

Depending on the age of the child and the type of tumour, between 20% and 80% of children or adolescents diagnosed with a brain tumour survive. For all tumour types and ages combined, the survival rate is 67%. Among children or adolescents who survive, the long term health and functioning consequences are serious.

The annual incidence rate of brain tumours in children and adolescents has remained consistent over the past 20 years with an average of 30 cases per million children under 20 years of age. The annual incidence rate of brain tumours is highest in children from zero to seven years of age, which is 35 cases per million children. The rate then drops and stays consistent from older childhood until early adolescence, which is 21 per million. After the age of 18, the incidence of brain tumours declines again.

Brain tumours in children differ significantly from adult brain tumours in their site of origin, histological features, clinical presentation, and tendency to spread early in the disease history to other parts of the nervous system. Brain tumours are nearly 25% more common in boys than in girls. Most childhood brain tumours arise in the supporting cells of the brain.

PNETs arise from undeveloped brain cells, which are primitive nerve cells, and are most common in the cerebrum part of the brain. PNETs are fast growing tumours and are highly malignant. Very often these tumours have spread within the central nervous system even before diagnosis.

Ependymomas arise from the cells that line the internal surfaces of the brain in the cerebral hemispheres. These tumours are most common among younger children and are often benign.

PNET and ependymoma tumours are most commonly found in children under five years of age. From ages five to nine, other types of tumours are more common.

Survival is lowest for infants diagnosed with a brain tumour under a year of age. In particular, only 20% of infants with a PNET are expected to survive. Survival increases with increasing age at diagnosis.

Children one to four years of age have a 59% survival rate, which increases to 64% in children five to nine years of age, 70% in pre-teens 10 to 14 years of age, and 77% in adolescents 15 to 19 years of age. Children and adolescents diagnosed will have the highest survival rate.

The incidence of brain tumours is higher in male children, children exposed to cranial ionizing radiation, and children with specific congenital anomalies such as neurofibromatosis. However, no single risk factor has been identified that accounts for a larger proportion of brain tumours found in children or adolescents.

Initial symptoms of childhood brain tumours include headaches and vomiting. These symptoms are then accompanied by seizures, dizziness, weakness, gait disturbance, and visual problems. Brain tumours are often diagnosed with a CAT scan, an MRI or a PET

scan, which is followed by a biopsy for histological typing and confirmation. Steroids are often given as the first line of therapy to help ease the swelling of the brain. If possible, the tumour is then removed by surgical resection. Malignant tumours often require radiation therapy and/or chemotherapy in addition to surgery.

• (1130)

It is estimated that up to 50% of all childhood tumours in the brain are benign, meaning they are slow growing and they rarely spread, in contrast to malignant tumours that are fast growing and invasive.

Some benign brain tumours have well-defined borders so removal is relatively easy. However, when located in a vital area of the brain, a benign tumour can be life threatening.

Some malignant brain tumours can have a benign clinical natural history, meaning they often start as benign and become malignant over time.

Brain tumours, whether malignant or benign, produce clinical effects of similar mechanisms of mass effect, hemorrhage, seizure and edema.

Data on benign brain tumours is not routinely collected by the provincial and territorial cancer registries in Canada. Some registries include benign brain tumours, while others simply do not. The Canadian Cancer Registry does not include data on benign brain tumours as it cannot be consistently collected across the country.

As benign brain tumours are not included in the Canadian Cancer Registry and are only included in some provincial cancer registries, we cannot accurately determine the national incidence or survival rate of children and adolescents diagnosed with a benign brain tumour in Canada in the way that we can for malignant tumours.

This lack of reporting is leading to an underestimation of the burden of brain tumours on Canadians and the Canadian health care system since up to 50% of benign tumours are not included. Though not malignant, benign brain tumours can cause serious disruption in normal function, especially among children whose brains are rapidly developing.

Unlike tumours in other areas of the body, tumours in the brain develop within a confined space where even a small growth can seriously affect normal brain function. The clinical effects of a brain tumour are similar regardless of whether they are benign or malignant due to their location.

In addition to the increased risk of death and/or loss of cognitive and neurological functioning, clinical manifestations of benign brain tumours include developmental delays, endocrine disorders, seizures, visual impairment, an increase in pressure on the brain, severe headaches, vomiting, ataxia and loss of balance.

Private Members' Business

In contrast to malignant brain tumours, the incidence of benign brain tumours increases with age. They are most common among older adolescents. Benign brain tumours are also more common in girls and adolescents, as opposed to malignant brain tumours that are found more often in boys.

While malignant tumours are most common in the infratentorial region of the brain, which is the bottom portion consisting of the cerebellum and brain stem, benign brain tumours are most common in the sellar region, a depression of the bone at the base of the skull.

The primary treatment for benign brain tumours is surgical resection, which can often be difficult depending on the location of the tumour. Incomplete resection can lead to tumour recurrence. Some children with benign brain tumours also receive cranial radiation.

Cancer therapy often produces adverse long term health outcomes that can manifest in months to years after completion of treatment and are commonly referred to as late effects. Young children in particular are at risk of significant neurological and cognitive sequelae despite the therapy they receive.

Survivors of benign brain tumours are often left with long term disabilities from both the disease and the treatment received.

Our knowledge of these tumours is limited without including them in a national registry such as the Canadian Cancer Registry. We cannot accurately estimate incidence or outcome and therefore, we cannot estimate the burden on Canadians or the Canadian health care system.

Because brain tumours cause disruption in normal function similar to that caused by malignant brain tumours, and because the location of a brain tumour is as important as its behaviour for morbidity and mortality, all cancer registries in the U.S. began to include benign brain tumours in their registries starting in 2004. Canadian provincial and territorial registries should also begin to collect data on benign brain tumours.

Michael Vandendool, a young boy in my daughter's class, is suffering from cancer at 10 years old. The opportunity for us to at least start to repair and begin work on the registry will help all.

• (1135)

Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to Motion No. 235, which is sponsored by my colleague, the member for Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley. I applaud his efforts on this motion, which I think will help tackle a particularly brutal form of cancer, that being cancer affecting the brain.

Health care issues are very important to Canadians and they should be very important to us. Members of Parliament should reflect on the issues that are of concern to their constituents. Therefore, let me explain why I think this motion on brain tumour statistics should receive the positive affirmation of all members of this House today.

Sometimes the best work is left undone because some of the necessary ingredients are missing. We may not even be aware of what those ingredients are or what information is lacking to answer an intriguing question. This motion addresses the great work of

conquering cancer and identifies a vital piece of data that is necessary to achieve that goal.

Cancer is a ceaseless and steady killer in modern society. There are few families who have not been affected by this deadly disease. Research into its eradication has continued for decades now. It is a highly desirable objective and certainly qualifies as a great work but is one which as yet remains unfinished.

In order to beat cancer, researchers need every clue and every opportunity to identify and treat that cancer. That is why it might come as a surprise for many to learn that researchers have so far been denied vital information in the fight to defeat cancer.

Today we are discussing the merits of Motion No. 235. This motion deals with just one form of cancer, cancer of the brain. It addresses how benign brain tumours have not been routinely identified and collected by the provincial and territorial cancer registries and that information is thus not included in the Canadian Cancer Registry.

These tumours have not been routinely collected, not because of any lack of desire to exercise due diligence, but because nobody issued the instructions to do so. It was not done that way yesterday and it still is not being done that way today. This lack of practice remains an oversight in Canada, but an oversight, of course, can easily be corrected. It is just a matter of issuing the necessary order.

These brain tumours are the potential missing ingredients in solving the mystery of brain cancer and in possibly saving thousands of Canadian lives every year.

There are several reasons why data on benign brain tumours should be collected.

First, there is the human dimension. Although all forms of cancer are horrifying in their potential to destroy life, brain cancer, or a malignant brain tumour, is uniquely destructive in that it devours both body and brain. Anyone who has had the profound misfortune of having to watch a loved one afflicted with this disease can attest to its awful progress through the body and the many layers of attendant suffering. While victims lose weight, strength and mobility, they also suffer from memory failure, loss of speech and collapse of cognitive response.

The tragic symptoms are often reminiscent of Alzheimer's disease in that sufferers can no longer remember their wives, their husbands, sons, daughters or friends. They are often unsure of their surroundings and unable to articulate their confusion. For anyone who has had to watch a close friend or relative die of this form of cancer, it is an experience they will carry with them for the rest of their lives and one they would never wish on another person. One is left with a profound anger that such an insidious disease can take a life in such a destructive fashion.

Motion No. 235 aims to provide better tools to strike back at this disease.

Private Members' Business

At the moment, brain cancer continues to destroy the lives of many Canadians. We can only wish that brain cancer were the rarest of occurrences. Unfortunately, that is not the case. Brain cancer is the most common solid tumour in children and youth. Each year in Canada over 200 children and youth under age 20 are diagnosed with a malignant brain tumour, and nearly 60 of those die from their disease. That is a 30% death rate.

Among those who survive, the long term health and functioning consequences may be serious. The tumour might not kill the patient but could adversely affect the functions of the brain, leaving the survivor alive but mentally afflicted for the rest of his or her life.

• (1140)

Additionally, brain cancer is also significant among young adults. In 2003, 388 cases were diagnosed within the 20 to 44 age group, or close to 20% of brain cancer cases among Canadians aged 20 or older. In total, 2,500 cases and 1,650 deaths from malignant brain and nervous system cancer are expected in 2007. Over 60% of those diagnosed with malignant tumours will die from that disease. This is a shockingly low survival rate and another reason why we need to do all that we can to stop this cancer in its tracks.

The number of brain and nervous system cancer cases would be increased by about 40% to 70%, if benign cases were included. Benign cases contribute a substantial proportion of the total burden of brain cancer.

I also want to refer to the creation of uniform national standards and guidelines for the surveillance of all malignant and benign brain tumours, which have the potential to improve the quality and completeness of brain tumour registration across Canada. The motion today would significantly enhance the quality control of this registration process.

Having this complete and accurate data on primary brain tumours would facilitate research into the causes of this disease, which in turn would lead to improved diagnosis and treatment of patients. It would, for example, help identify factors that influence the risk for developing malignant and non-malignant brain tumours.

Quite simply, we do not know why people get brain cancer. In some cases it appears to be the result of the progression of another kind of cancer. It may be caused by exposure to toxic substances or radiation. Cancer research has shown a quantifiable relationship between intestinal cancers and diet. It is beyond refutation for decades that smoking causes lung and throat cancer, but what can we do to avoid brain cancer?

One study suggested prolonged exposure to cell phones was a possible reason. Just as people have adapted their lives to avoid other kinds of cancer, I believe we need to do that again. This is another reason why the motion today is so necessary.

Cancer registries serve a very useful purpose by linking available sources of administrative data to obtain information on the number of new cancer cases and to assist in patient follow up. This information allows basic surveillance and establishes a platform to provide the additional information needed to develop and evaluate cancer control programs.

The inclusion of benign brain tumours is needed in registries to allow these tumours to be compared across the country. It should be clear that like so many other issues in the House, the motion today affects more than just Canada and Canadians. It will have a universal impact.

Finally, the motion is highly compatible with the government's agenda to increase collaboration with the provinces and territories in the area of health. It is well aligned with the objective of the Public Health Agency of Canada to create a comprehensive pan-Canadian surveillance system. Accessibility of information is critically important in brain cancer.

I started my speech by stating that a great work can remain unfinished because some component is missing in the building of that great work. I believe we have identified such a component today. The motion before us asks for a simple measure and demands little, except to do the right thing, but this simple change could significantly help researchers to discover more about what causes brain cancer, how we can all avoid and how it can be more successfully treated.

For the thousands of Canadian this year alone, who could potentially fall victim to this disease, the motion is critically important. Who knows how many lives may be saved due to the simple resolve of Parliament to make a necessary change?

I urge my colleagues on both sides of the House to support the motion.

• (1145)

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the creation of uniform national standards and guidelines for the surveillance of all malignant and benign brain tumours has the potential to improve the quality and completeness of brain tumour registration across Canada. Complete and accurate data on preliminary brain tumours would facilitate research into the causes of this disease, which may lead to improved diagnosis and treatment of patients.

Currently published statistics usually include malignant tumours. Benign tumours are slower growing and do not invade important structures, while malignant tumours are fast growing and may invade and damage important structures. Nevertheless, for improved cancer surveillance, it is worthwhile for cancer registries to collect and report standardized information on benign brain tumours since they result in similar systems and outcomes as malignant tumours. Ideally, data collected by cancer registries should include all tumours of the central nervous system.

Cancer registries have been created in each of the provinces and territories, but the sources of data and relevant legislation varies. In addition to provincial, territorial registries, there is a central Canadian cancer registry maintained at Statistics Canada, which includes selected data from each of the provincial and territorial registries.

Private Members' Business

Cancer registries serve several purposes by linking available sources of administrative data to obtain information on the number of new cases and corresponding patient follow-up information. This information allows basic surveillance and establishes a platform to provide the additional information needed to develop an evaluate cancer control programs.

Current uses for cancer registries include linkages to other administrative databases such as vital statistics and further assesses potential causes of cancer such as behavioural risk factors as well as occupational and environmental exposures.

A total of 2,500 cases and 1,650 deaths in Canada from malignant brain and nervous system cancers were expected in 2006. The number of brain and nervous system cases registered would be increased by around 40% to 70% if benign cases were included. Based on underlying causes reported on death certificates, the number of deaths would be increased by about 30% when benign and uncertain brain tumours were included.

Benign cases contribute a substantial proportion of the total burden of brain cancer. The inclusion of benign brain tumours in standard data collection and the adoption of standard site and historical definitions for tabulating benign brain tumours is needed to incorporate these tumours fully into the Canadian cancer registry and allow comparability of information across registries and internationally.

Including non-malignant brain tumours in the Canadian cancer registry is also needed to allow these tumours to be studied fully, including an evaluation of the trends in the rates of newly diagnosed cases for this type of cancer.

It will be necessary to report and analyze data for non-malignant central nervous system tumours separately from malignant tumours. By including data on these two tumour types in the registries, it will be available for use in analytic epidemiological research studies that will help identify factors that influence the risk for developing malignant and non-malignant tumours.

Another reason why it is important to include benign brain tumours in registration is that there is a large number of sub-types of brain and nervous system cancers. The chance of recovering or prognosis and the choice of treatment depend on the type, grade and location of the tumour and whether the cancer cells remain after surgery and/or have spread to other parts of the brain. For example, survival rates are generally higher for benign meningiomas than for malignant meningiomas, but the treatment of benign tumours may be limited by their location. Favourably situated lesions are usually amenable to complete removal by surgery, while other types are more difficult to fully and safely excise.

• (1150)

Reporting of benign brain cancer is expected to increase the total overall number of reported cancer cases by about 1%. There would be some implications for the registry to this added reporting, including some modest costs, the need for training and database upgrades and possibly revisions in legislation.

Registries may also need access to additional sources of administrative data to ensure that cases not included in the current source are captured. For example, where cases are not hospitalized

shortly after diagnosis, access to other data sources, such as pathology records or physician claims data, becomes more important.

Completeness of reporting is critical for cancer registries. Accurate case counts are necessary to assess the burden of cancer, to guide cancer control program planning, to prioritize the allocation of health resources and to facilitate epidemiologic research. This is a particular challenge for registries with access to limited sources of administrative data.

Cancer registry information is continually being enhanced with data relevant to these programs. For example, stage data, the extent of the disease at the time of diagnosis, was not collected when cancer registration was initiated.

However, currently there are collaborative initiatives among the cancer registries, Statistics Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada to collect cancer stage data at the time of diagnosis. Stage information is necessary to better describe and evaluate cancer survival and cancer control programs. Other data enhancements are being considered to fill the information gap between diagnosis and death.

In addition to adding cancer stage data to the cancer registries, current priorities for enhanced cancer surveillance under exploration with provinces, territories and cancer stakeholders are the collection of radiation and other treatment data, treatment access, treatment outcome, improved record linkages and consideration of privacy legislation.

These ongoing enhancements of the cancer registries will also benefit the study of both benign and malignant brain tumours.

Knowing more about the risks for brain cancer and its evaluation and impact across a lifetime is particularly important because brain cancer is a significant cancer among young adults. In 2003, 388 cases were diagnosed within the 20 to 44 age group, or close to 20% of brain cancer cases among Canadians aged 20 and older. I can attest to those age groups because my brother died of an astrocytoma, which is a malignant brain cancer.

The Brain Tumour Foundation of Canada has developed a patient resource handbook, directed to patients, family members, caregivers and other individuals who have been affected by brain tumours.

It is clear that for Canadian cancer registries to provide the most complete information for brain tumours, data on both benign and malignant tumours needs to be collected. I ask members to join with me in commending the member for introducing the motion and giving it the support of the House.

Private Members' Business

•(1155)

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I first want to acknowledge the great comments that speakers on all sides of the House have made and the amazing personal experiences that so many have had.

The first speaker was the member for Oak Ridges—Markham who spoke of his personal experience. Almost every speaker, including the speaker in the last hour of debate, the member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, spoke of their experience. It has certainly been a moving debate for all of us, really, and I appreciate all the comments and all the support.

The private member's motion started from the experience of two young boys in my riding. The whole purpose of the motion is to establish uniform and complete brain tumour records. It came from the parents of these two young boys.

One boy was Matthew MacDonald. He was diagnosed at age 11. He passed away from his brain tumour at age 14, but everybody who knew Matthew said he was an inspiration. He was designated an IWK hero at the Izaak Walton Killam Hospital. I am sorry I did not get to meet Matthew, but he sounds like he was quite a boy.

The second young boy in my riding was Brandon Dempsey. He was diagnosed at age four. He has had three brain tumour operations, chemotherapy and radiation. He is now 12 years old. He is in grade 7, and he has an 88% average, which is better than I ever did.

They are both inspirations as are their parents. I want to acknowledge their parents because they have worked tirelessly and campaigned to no end to increase the research availability and the information available on this subject. I want to commend Allison and Wanda MacDonald, the parents of Matthew, and Jennifer and Alan Dempsey, the parents of Brandon. It is only because of them that we are here today.

I also want to thank the Minister of Health for his support in this as well as the parliamentary secretary, and all the members of the Liberal Party, the Conservative Party and the NDP who have given their support to the motion to establish simple, consistent and complete records for brain tumour registry.

I want to thank the Prime Minister. We had our first hour of debate on this on December 12, and I knew that Brandon Dempsey would be here for that hour today. I asked the Prime Minister if he would take a moment to shake Brandon's hand as he left the lobby and the Prime Minister said he would be glad to do so. I really appreciated that.

Then a little while later the Prime Minister's Office called me and said that the Prime Minister wanted to talk to Brandon about his brain tumour and could I bring Brandon and his mother Jennifer up to the office. I was more than glad to do that. We went up and sat there and the Prime Minister and Brandon talked about his brain tumour. They talked about the effect of his operations. They talked about the private member's motion and what it could do. Then they talked about important things like baseball and hockey. It was really fascinating to see them match wits about hockey and I have to say that the Prime Minister, although Brandon knew a lot about hockey, held his own and he did us proud. It was a great experience for me,

certainly a highlight of Brandon's experience, and made me proud to be a Conservative member of Parliament.

I want to thank the doctors and the hospital officials who have contacted us from all over Canada. I want to name them all, but I do not have time. However, I want to mention one. I mentioned some of them last time. I want to mention Dr. Rolando del Maestro. Mr. Speaker, you and I just looked at the book. It is an incredible book that the doctor wrote. He sent it to me with a note in it, talking about how Motion No. 235 could help brain tumour patients. I appreciated that so much. I was talking to somebody this morning who knows Dr. del Maestro. I was told that Dr. del Maestro just performs miracles for people who come in to see him with no hope.

I want to thank the victims of brain tumours. We had hundreds of letters from victims. I cannot read them all. I read some in the last hour, but I want to read one from Irona Fraser. Irona Fraser is a great grandmother. She is a victim of a brain tumour. She has had a brain tumour for 19 years. It is inoperable. She wrote:

—I consider myself lucky. I have to pray that your Motion No. 235 will pass in the House of Commons in February.

She gets to the crux of it. She says it better than almost any one of us have said it here today:

Several relatives in my family have suffered different types of brain tumours. It makes you wonder why this is. If they would take national standards across the country, I feel that this would help answer some of these questions.

If the motion passes and we achieve the goals we hope we will achieve, we will establish national standards, and we will find out why Irona and some of her relatives have this affliction. However, I thank her very much for her letter and for her support. I appreciate it very much.

•(1200)

We have had an impact on many countries all over the world, even as far away as Tanzania. We have had emails from people whose children have been victims of brain tumours. They saw this on braintumour.ca. It has been an incredible experience for us and I am glad to have participated in this experience.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): It being 12:04 p.m., the time for debate has expired.

The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): In my opinion the yeas have it.

Statutory Order

And five or more members having risen.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): Pursuant to Standing Order 93, division stands deferred until Wednesday, February 14, 2007, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

• (1205)

[English]

ANTI-TERRORISM ACT

The House resumed from February 9 consideration of the motion.

Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to contribute to the debate on the government's motion to extend for a further three years sections 83.28 to 83.3 of the Criminal Code, which is now part of the Anti-terrorism Act passed by Parliament following the terrible events of September 11, 2001. The events of that day will be forever indelibly stamped into the memories of many Canadians because they watched helplessly as terrorists, using commercial aircraft, deliberately ploughed into the World Trade Center killing hundreds of unsuspecting innocent people.

The Anti-terrorism Act was created after the September 11, 2001 tragedy to meet the United Nations requirements pursuant to the international convention of the suppression of terrorism bombings and the international convention of the financing of terrorism.

In the aftermath of such a tragedy, fear gripped the world. Fear gripped Canada as a nation, the public and its leaders, including the United Nations. As members who have spoken before me have said, Canada, along with other member states around the world, abided by the time limitations imposed by the United Nations in resolution 1373 dated September 28, 2001 requiring member states to adopt anti-terrorism legislation and policies within 90 days.

The obvious end result was to protect our countries and citizens against further acts of terrorism. If that protection meant that citizens might lose some of their rights, it was at that time a small price to pay for that type of security governments began to implement. Polls conducted during that period showed that Canadians were quite happy to sacrifice some of those rights for safety and security.

The Liberal government at that time followed constraints imposed by the UN under the prevailing circumstances and the air of deterrence that existed during that period. Do not misunderstand me. It is not my intent to say that those acts of deterrence may not exist today and that the climate is any different now than it was in 2001. We now live in a world of hyper-surveillance and constant threats to the individual safety and security of our citizens and even leaders. This does not mean that the human rights of our citizens must be taken away with impunity. It is important for us to shift our focus to more preventative intelligence and action.

Our country's law enforcement personnel have been doing an admirable job and they have not had to resort to the heavy-handed

use of sections 83.28 to 83.3 of the Criminal Code in the last five years.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, in solidarity with my Liberal Party colleagues, I will vote against the government motion to maintain sections 83.28 and 83.3 of the Criminal Code, because not only were these sections not used in the five years they were in force, but our Criminal Code gives our legislation more than enough power to protect the people of Canada against real or imagined acts of terrorism. I am referring here to section 494. Consequently, these sections should cease to exist within the Anti-terrorism Act.

In the meantime, like my colleagues, I await the final report of the Subcommittee on the Review of the Anti-terrorism Act, once it has finished reviewing this extremely complex legislation.

This important legislation was so hastily drafted that it was impossible to conduct the exhaustive review warranted by the complexity of the subject matter. I believe that in 2002, my colleague from Vancouver Quadra called it "a rational, proportional response to the transnational threat of terrorism by suicide bombers".

Since this legislation received royal assent in 2001, there have been heated, contentious debates not only in the House of Commons, but across the country, involving human rights activists, community representatives and many other organizations.

• (1210)

[English]

The Anti-terrorism Act was created to respond to a substantial and emergency need. Although the legislation was necessary and reasonable to protect Canadians against terrorism, concerns have been raised that it violated constitutional rights such as the principle of the presumption of innocence, the principle of freedom of expression, freedom of association, protection against arbitrary detention, and protection against self-incrimination.

These are fundamental provisions enshrined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and in other international instruments signed by Canada.

Fully aware of these inherent problems, Parliament included in the Anti-terrorism Act section 145, the requirement for a comprehensive review of its provisions and operations three years after it received royal assent. Also section 145, paragraph 2, requires a report containing any statement of changes.

Moreover, sunset clauses already found in the Criminal Code, section 83.32, were added again because of concerns stressed by many human rights activists that the provisions of the Anti-terrorism Act could be used in an inappropriate manner.

Pursuant to the Criminal Code subsection 83.32(1), sections 83.27, dealing with investigating hearings, and 83.3 dealing with preventative arrests, which we are dealing with today:

—cease to apply at the end of the fifteenth sitting day of Parliament after December 31, 2006 unless, before the end of that day, the application of those sections is extended by a resolution—

Subsection 83.32(1) of the Criminal Code says that a motion for the adoption of the resolution cannot be amended.

We in the Liberal caucus at that time, of which I was a part, insisted on these safeguards, so members of Parliament could reflect on their decision at that time of crisis, and at a later time ask the question which I now pose to this House today. Can those contested provisions continue to be used in a free and democratic society? The answer is no.

If I may again borrow the words of my hon. colleague from Vancouver Quadra, with which I fully agree, and with which I am sure my colleagues on both sides of the House will also agree:

All provisions should comply with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms without override by the "notwithstanding" clause 33.

This was stated on January 3, 2002.

I want to remind my colleagues that the pillar on which the charter stands is based on sections 1 and 33. In other words, there should be no limitation to the constitutional right of individuals unless this limitation is justified in a free and democratic society, and the test has been set in the leading case of *R. v. Oakes* - [1986] 1 S.C.R. 103.

The case goes back some 20 years, but it is still relevant today. According to the decision by the Supreme Court of Canada, and its explanation of a limitation to constitutional rights under the charter, section 1, these may be sustained after two conditions have been met, and I read here from paragraph 70 of *R. v. Oakes*.

[*Translation*]

First, the objective of the measure—in this case the legislation—must be pressing and substantial.

Second, the means chosen to implement this measure—the legislative purpose—must be reasonable in a free and democratic society.

In order to fulfill the second requirement, three criteria must be met:

First, the impairment of rights must be rationally connected to the objective of the legislation.

Second, the contested provision should impair as little as possible the guarantees of the Charter.

Third, there must be a proportionality between the effects of the measures and its objectives so that achieving the legislative objective does not supersede impairment of the right.

Although the provisions in question fulfill the first condition, I do not believe they fulfill the second, given that they do not meet any of its criteria.

In the wake of 9/11, events were sufficiently pressing and substantial to limit certain provisions of the Charter of Rights at the time and to affirm Canada's commitment to the safety and security of its citizens.

The Liberal government of the time firmly believed that security measures had to be taken, despite the concerns of individual members of the party, including myself, to the effect that citizens' rights could be infringed. It was exactly for this reason that the sunset clause was instituted enabling us to revisit the provisions of the Act and consequently review the anti-terrorist legislation as a whole.

Statutory Order

I continue to believe that the provisions are neither necessary nor reasonable in a free and democratic society.

● (1215)

[*English*]

Very recently, in fact, in its October 2006 interim report, the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security revealed that there has been no recourse to these provisions. Since Criminal Code subsection 83.31(1) obliges the Attorney General of Canada to publish the usage of subsection 83.28(1), investigating hearings, and section 83.3, preventative arrests, not once in the past five years has there been a need to use these sections.

Why, then, does the government feel the need to extend the sunset clause for another three years? What evidence does the government have that the opposition and other members of the House are not privy to that justifies this law being kept on our books?

It is important that the government come clean and inform the House of why it needs to be overzealous in its approach to law and order. We saw recently the efficiency of our law enforcement agencies in the arrest of 17 young men living in and around Toronto who were suspected of possible acts against the state. Maybe my colleagues on that side of the House can tell me if, in the process of carrying out their duties, the police agencies involved felt it was necessary to invoke these sections of the Criminal Code as it applies to terrorism.

Is there something that members on this side of the House should know? If so, I would impress upon the minister responsible for safety and security the need to inform us. If it must be done behind closed doors for security reasons, I am sure we would all understand. In the meantime, I intend to vote against the government's motion to extend the sunset clause, and I call on all members to repeal these sections of the act completely.

[*Translation*]

At this point in Canada's development as a nation, measures that are perceived, for all intents and purposes, as violations of human rights cannot and must not survive in our society, unless they satisfy the review of which I spoke earlier. In the opinion of the Supreme Court, reviews are reasonable in a free and democratic society.

I cannot think of any measure that is so pressing as to lead this government to extend the life of these instruments.

[*English*]

Canada has met its international obligations in a time of crisis, as outlined by UN resolution 1373 requiring member states to take preemptive action, over and beyond what presently exists in our Criminal Code dealing with indictable offences. Our law enforcement personnel have not been constrained, nor have they had reason to resort to using these sections that govern the Anti-terrorism Act in carrying out their investigative work, which has led to arrests of possible terrorists.

[*Translation*]

Once again, I will be voting against the government motion to extend the application of sections 83.28, 83.29 and 83.3 of the Criminal Code, as they pertain to the Anti-terrorism Act.

Statutory Order

•(1220)

[English]

Mr. Gord Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the chair of the subcommittee that has been reviewing the Anti-terrorism Act and one who has spent many hours on this, along with committee members from all sides of the House, I have a question for the hon. member.

The members from the Liberal Party who sat on the subcommittee supported the recommendation to extend the sunset provisions. That recommendation went to the standing committee and, once again, Liberal members on the committee recommended to the House that these sunset provisions be extended. Why the flip-flop now?

[Translation]

Ms. Raymonde Folco: Mr. Speaker, I feel I explained my point of view very clearly in my speech. This is not a flip-flop at all. We each have the right to our own opinions.

My opinion is based on the facts, and it is simple. Since the House voted to include these provisions in the Anti-terrorism Act, the authorities have not seen fit to use them in situations immediately following the horrible tragedy in the United States. Therefore, I do not see why, five years later, we should keep actions and provisions on the books when they go against our very own Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

[English]

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the aftermath of the horrific events of 9/11, there was a great deal of confusion. We really did not know what the threat was and what we were dealing with, so these legislative tools were passed and in fact infringed on some of our rights.

I have a question for the member, in that since that time, however, we have put in place these particular tools that infringe on our free and democratic society. Is there any particular reason that we have not used investigative hearings or preventative arrests in the five years since the legislation was first passed?

[Translation]

Ms. Raymonde Folco: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question.

Obviously, it is difficult, if not impossible, for me to answer that question because I am not a member of the RCMP. The RCMP keeps that information closely guarded. Nevertheless, I think the question deserves an answer. We assume that the RCMP is a reasonable institution that takes its work very seriously. If it did not see fit to use these provisions, that is because it saw no need to. I would like to emphasize that there are already laws in place. Such laws are part of this country's Criminal Code. The provisions we are talking about simply duplicate those in the Criminal Code.

[English]

Mr. Dave Batters (Palliser, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the hon. member. She made the comment that she bases her opinion and the way that she is going to vote on facts, but the hon. member for Leeds—Grenville pointed out that the Liberal members who sit on the committee, and who, I assume, also base their opinions on fact, voted for these provisions to be extended. Is

the member saying that Liberal members on the committee did not base their opinions on fact? That is my first question.

Second, some comments from members opposite allude to the fact that perhaps these measures shortly following the tragedies of 9/11 were not constitutional, so is the member saying that the Liberal government at the time was wrong to bring in those provisions? We on this side of the House believe it was the right thing to do and we commend the previous government for doing it. We believe these provisions should be extended and we believe it is still the right thing to do. Was the government wrong then? Are the Liberal members of the committee wrong now?

[Translation]

Ms. Raymonde Folco: Mr. Speaker, during those terrible events, we were thrust into the situation without anyone asking us our opinion. The planes crashed and we were forced to react. Perhaps the member across was not here when we debated the matter here in this House. It was a lively, yet difficult debate; lively, because many people had opinions and because we were obliged to abide by UN Resolution 1373. We were obliged to do so. However, this Parliament must also respect the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. As I mentioned in my speech—and I hope the member across listened carefully—the Charter contains certain presumptions that we definitely exceeded.

I now think that, at that time—I repeat, at that time, as I said in my speech—it was perhaps what had to be done. We had to react immediately. The day the planes crashed into the World Trade Center, I was in another country. When I saw the images on TV, I thought that a third world war had broken out and that I should perhaps return to Canada immediately. No one knew what would happen next. There were three plane crashes. There could have been a fourth, as well as a number of other tragedies. We therefore had to ensure a quick and firm response. That is what we did.

Several years later, events have shown that we can now look at it again and our reaction can now be much calmer and much more informed. That is what we are now doing.

I never said that we were wrong. I simply said that we reacted to a situation to which we had to respond and that is no longer the case today.

•(1225)

[English]

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, given that opposition members cannot ask any intelligent questions about the content of the member's speech, I hope the Conservatives will be able to put some content into their speeches on this topic.

My question is related to the crimes in Toronto that the member talked about, where there were 17 arrests related to terrorism. Could the member specify if she is aware of which sections of the Criminal Code were used for those arrests? Were they effective in that case?

Statutory Order

[*Translation*]

Ms. Raymonde Folco: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately I do not know the answer but I will certainly find out. I am not a lawyer and I would have to check the facts. However, as I mentioned, given that certain provisions of the Anti-terrorist Act cover sections 83.28 and 83.3 of the Criminal Code of Canada, we can presume that these sections were used. Nevertheless, I will advise the House of any other information as quickly as possible.

[*English*]

Mr. Gary Schellenberger (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a very short question for the member. I wonder what we have committees for. Are people going to committee meetings just to waste time? Do committees not have some relevance in this Parliament? That is my question for the member.

Ms. Raymonde Folco: Mr. Speaker, I think that is a wonderful question. I am not surprised that my colleague across the floor would say that. My colleague across the floor has the habit inside his own party of following the party line 100%. The member always follows the party line that his leader always gives: that they vote this way and there is no other way.

On this side of the House, I am very happy to say, many of us think before we vote and think before we discuss. That is what the Liberal Party is all about.

Mr. Gord Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with respect to the motion to renew two provisions of the Anti-terrorism Act that are subject to a sunset clause, I suggest we are not faced with a difficult choice today.

As the House knows, the investigative hearing and recognizance with conditions provisions introduced by the act are due to expire very soon. I respectfully submit to the House that the way forward is clear. These provisions should be extended.

Some may remember last May when the Hon. John Howard addressed a joint session of Parliament. The Prime Minister of Australia reminded us that:

Terrorism will not be defeated by rolling ourselves into a small ball, going into a corner and imagining that somehow or other we will escape notice.

He went on to say that wishful thinking was not a policy and failure to act was not an option. He said that combating terrorism requires that we have tools that are appropriate to defend ourselves.

The investigative hearing and recognizance with conditions provisions provide police and prosecutors with those essential and appropriate tools.

At the same time, we should also remember our own history and experience with terrorism. Twenty-five years ago, the McDonald Commission said something that was reiterated by Justice O'Connor in his recent report:

Canada must meet both the requirements of security and the requirements of democracy; we must never forget that the fundamental purpose of the former is to secure the latter.

As parliamentarians, we are responsible for ensuring the safety and security of Canadians in the face of known threats. Canadians look to the federal government to protect them from terrorist violence.

When it comes to the terrorist threat, one thing is crystal clear: prosecution after the fact is simply not an adequate response. We need strategies that differ from the traditional reactive approach of ordinary criminal law investigation and enforcement.

The underlying principle of the Anti-terrorism Act is the prevention of terrorist activity.

It is worth noting that preventive legal mechanisms are used regularly in this country to protect our citizens and those mechanisms are absolutely essential in order to preserve our right in a free and democratic society.

For example, the Minister of Justice described section 810 of the Criminal Code, which authorizes the use of a mechanism known as a peace bond. These are used in dealing with domestic violence, organized crime and serious sexual offences where the risk of particularly abhorrent forms of violence is such that we as a society have decided that it is preferable to take preventive measures rather than wait to prosecute after extreme violence has occurred.

Every free and democratic society must retain an appropriate legal power properly supervised by the judiciary to investigate and to take preventive steps before criminal violence occurs. These provisions have consistently been found to comply with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

I will briefly outline the provisions of the Anti-terrorism Act at issue today if only to demonstrate why they are appropriate and necessary.

The investigative hearing is available when necessary to assist in the investigation of terrorism offences that have been or will be committed. Where there are reasonable grounds to believe that a terrorism offence has been or will be committed, a court may issue an order for the gathering of information. A peace officer may only apply for this order after obtaining the consent of the attorney general at the federal or provincial level, as the case may be.

Then the judge hearing the application must be satisfied that there are reasonable grounds to believe that a terrorism offence has been or will be committed and that information about the offence is likely to be obtained as a result of the order.

The investigative hearing power is unusual in some respects but it is not unique in Canadian law. There are investigations by coroners in Canada where this type of thing happens quite regularly. Someone who has been or may be accused takes the stand and gives evidence in open court.

There is another procedure under the Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Act that allows for an order for the gathering of evidence.

At an investigative hearing, the charter right against self-incrimination is fully enforced. The subject may be compelled to answer questions but anything entered into evidence or evidence derived from testimony given by the person cannot be used to prosecute the person for any offence except perjury or the giving of contradictory evidence.

Statutory Order

The investigative hearing of the Anti-terrorism Act is a well-balanced measure that does not in any way diminish the liberties of witnesses. Compelled witness testimony at the investigative stage is new to Canadian criminal law but witnesses have always been compellable at trial.

•(1230)

Let me stress that investigative hearings are not criminal prosecutions. The person compelled to appear is not an accused but a witness. In that sense, it is very similar to the American grand jury system, which has been found to be constitutional over and over again.

In fact, if we were to put our own legislation alongside the anti-terrorism laws made in other free and democratic societies, such as the U.K., Australia or the United States, I think we would find that Canadian legislation is probably the least stringent. The measures we have taken are well within any constitutionally appropriate response.

Our legislation is replete with various safeguards to ensure an open and transparent process. I believe these safeguards demonstrate that Parliament has given due and proportionate recognition to the unique setting in which investigative hearings would take place.

For example, the provision explicitly states that the person appearing has the right to retain and instruct counsel at any stage of the proceeding. The judge can impose any conditions on the hearing to protect the witness, third parties and the integrity of the investigation.

The Supreme Court of Canada in June 2004 upheld the constitutional validity of the investigative hearing provision. The court noted the important role played by the judge and counsel in the hearing procedure, to ensure appropriate regard for due process and to uphold constitutional rights.

In a companion case, the Supreme Court held that there was a presumption that investigative hearings should be held in open court. The burden of demonstrating a need for secrecy in such proceedings rests with the government. The court also noted that the protection against self-incrimination afforded to witnesses at their hearings actually went beyond charter requirements.

The final safeguard that Parliament put in place with respect to this provision was to make it subject to a five year sunset clause. The five years are almost up and I respectfully submit that we are not able to take the position that it would be prudent to dispense with this provision.

this is well-designed legislation. It is uniquely Canadian. Canadians should take comfort that restraint and careful judgment have characterized the approach taken to these measures.

The other provision subject to the sunset clause of the Anti-terrorism Act is the recognizance with conditions. This has sometimes been called preventative arrest but in fact a more accurate term might be preventive release.

The purpose of this provision is not to arrest a person but to put that person under judicial supervision in order to prevent the carrying out of a terrorist activity. It is designed to assist law enforcement officers in disrupting terrorist attacks and the onus is

always on the state to justify keeping a person in custody or imposing conditions. If a judge determines that there is no need for the person to enter into recognizance, the person will be released.

This provision is only available under strictly defined conditions and is also subject to numerous safeguards to ensure that individual rights are protected to the greatest extent possible.

Generally, the prior consent of the relevant attorney general is required before the person can become compelled to appear before a judge and a provincial court judge must be satisfied by the evidence presented that the police officer has reasonable grounds to believe that a terrorist activity will be carried out and suspects, on reasonable grounds, that the imposition of a recognizance with conditions is necessary to prevent the carrying out of a terrorist activity.

Once the hearing is complete, the judge may order that the person should enter into a recognizance, in which case the person will be bound to keep the peace and be of good behaviour and respect any other reasonable conditions for up to 12 months. Only if the person refuses or fails to enter into the recognizance can he or she be detained for up to 12 months.

Parliament has also provided for the possibility of arrest without warrant in certain circumstances. There has been a great deal of comment about this provision. I will only remind the House that it was designed to prevent a terrorist attack and save innocent lives.

If arrested without warrant, a person detained must be brought before a provincial court judge within 24 hours or as soon as possible if a judge is not available within that period. The consent of the relevant attorney general must be obtained by then. The presumption is always that the person will be released as soon as possible.

Upon being brought before a judge, there are four possible outcomes for the person for whom a recognizance is sought: First, the hearing takes place and the person is released without signing a recognizance; second, the hearing takes place and the person is released under a recognizance with various conditions as determined by the judge; third, the hearing is remanded to a later date and, under no circumstances can that be more than 48 hours later, however, the person can be detained in the interim; and fourth, the hearing takes place and the person can be detained for up to 12 months because of his or her refusal to sign the recognizance.

•(1235)

Finally, the sunset clause referred to earlier, providing for the expiry after five years, also applies to the recognizance with conditions. It can only be extended by parallel resolution of the two Houses of Parliament.

These are not radically new powers. A similar capability is afforded by section 495 of the Criminal Code which permits a peace officer to arrest without warrant anyone he or she believes on reasonable grounds is about to commit an indictable offence. Some have asked how useful this power is. Can a peace bond for terrorists really prevent terrorist activity? Of course, it is unlikely to stop suicide bombers but that misses the point. The recognizance with conditions is designed to disrupt preparations for terrorist activity and prevent attacks from being carried out.

Statutory Order

As chair of the subcommittee reviewing the Anti-terrorism Act, I have had the opportunity to review the complex public policy issues involved in formulating an appropriate response to a terrorist threat. I believe I speak for the majority of my colleagues on the subcommittee when I say that these provisions are important tools in support of the prevention and prosecution of terrorism.

Others have argued that they should not be renewed because they have hardly been used at all. While neither provision has been used to date, this should not suggest that they are not important or may not be needed in the future. We should not gauge the importance of these tools by how often we use them. Certain offences in our criminal law are rarely prosecuted, such as treason. Should we jettison those as well? I should think not.

I will now turn to the question of the sunset clause which applies only to the provisions of the Anti-terrorism Act at issue today.

We now face the very real prospect that these essential devices will be taken out of our hands. We have only a few days left to ensure that we are not left with a hole in our safety net or, as Prime Minister Howard put it, to ensure that we have the appropriate tools to defend ourselves.

To deprive the government and the people of Canada of these tools would not be prudent. I could compare it with an insurance policy. We would not cancel our insurance policy because we have not had any problems in our neighbourhood. Some day someone might break into our house and we would like to have an insurance policy in place at the time.

I share the Minister of Justice's desire to ensure that we as a country have the necessary legislative tools to protect the safety and security of all Canadians and to prevent, disrupt and deter terrorist activity in Canada. In fact, I believe Canada can do more and that we can play a stronger role in the global effort to defeat terrorism. By strengthening our own national security, we can contribute to the international fight against terrorism.

The House of Commons subcommittee on the review of the Anti-terrorism Act, of which I am the chair, released an interim report on these two provisions on October 23 last year. The recommendations in the majority report called for a five year extension as well as amendments to the investigate hearing power so that it could only be used to investigate imminent attacks and not past terrorist activity.

The Bloc Québécois and NDP members of the subcommittee issued a dissenting opinion in which they called for the abolition of the recognizance with conditions, but otherwise supported the recommendations of the majority. No government decision has yet been made with respect to the subcommittee's suggestions.

A three year extension, two years shorter than recommended, would provide the necessary time to consider the subcommittee's proposed changes and to introduce legislative amendments, if the government decides to do so.

In addition, the government has not yet received the recommendations of the subcommittee with regard to the other provisions of the Anti-terrorism Act. We expect a report to be adopted in the very near future. A three year extension would provide the necessary

window of opportunity for adequate study and to table and pass legislation, if necessary.

As I mentioned a moment ago, the appropriate response to terrorism involves complex public policy issues. I believe the government would also benefit from a three year renewal of these provisions in the sense that it would provide adequate time to consider the outcome of other related reviews, such as the recommendations of Justice O'Connor in the Arar inquiry, the ongoing Air-India inquiry, and the Supreme Court's decision on the process used for security certificates. All of these other processes are related to and will, in some way, bear on the government's course of action on counter-terrorism.

● (1240)

It is no secret that Canada, like other democratic societies around the world, introduced these kinds of preventive measures in response to the 9/11 terror attacks. Five years later we unfortunately see that the threat of terrorism is more complex, extreme, sophisticated and more global than ever before.

Canada and Canadians are not immune from terrorist activity. We cannot roll ourselves up into a ball and hope it will all go away. Twenty-four Canadians died in the September 11 attacks. Two Canadians were victims in the bombings in 2002 and most of the 329 victims of the Air-India bombing were Canadians. Let us not forget that Ahmed Ressam, the so-called millennium bomber, was arrested as he left Canada on his way to bomb the Los Angeles airport.

Our intelligence services tell us that there are active terrorist cells in Canada and they provide information about their contacts around the world. Recent arrests in Canada and elsewhere suggest that there is an ongoing willingness on the part of groups and individuals to use violence in support of political, ideological and religious agendas. The pervasive nature of terrorist activities in the world today means we will continue to need the provisions of the act for some time to come.

I respectfully submit that the recognizance with conditions and the investigative hearing provisions enable Canada to continue to respond to the threat posed by terrorism. These two provisions should, at a minimum, be extended by resolution for another three years. I urge all hon. members to support these extension of these provisions.

● (1245)

Mr. Mario Silva (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, I congratulate my hon. colleague. He spoke quite eloquently about the safety concerns facing both our country and our nation, but these safety concerns have to also be balanced with our beliefs and rights under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. When we brought in the Anti-terrorism Act, we specifically put in a sunset clause so it could apply to things like investigative hearings and preventive arrest. We did that because we saw a potential threat to our civil liberties.

Statutory Order

The question I have is whether these measures been effective and the answer thus far has been, no, they have been not been effective. We have a situation where all are concerned. All of us in the Liberal Party and other members of the House are very much concerned about issues of safety both at home and abroad, but we have to balance that with our concern for civil liberties and if they are under threat.

I believe the sunset clause was put in the bill specifically to address that concern. We are not addressing do that however. That is the reason why all evidence has shown that the sunset period should in fact expire, as it has been proven that this law has not been effective. The issue of civil liberties and rights are very much of concern to us, which we strongly cherish. They are protected by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Mr. Gord Brown: Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend for Davenport asks a good question. The court has found that in fact there has been recognition and balance on this. They were found to be constitutional. I suggest the hon. member spend some time speaking with the members of his party, who spent many hours working on this very important issue.

I also want to speak about something that I mentioned in my speech, which is the fact that so much work is going on right now in terms of dealing with the terrorist threat. The government is only asking for three more years. More recommendations will come forward from the committee. If all members would support a three-year extension, it would allow the next elected Parliament to also have an opportunity to review this with another three years' experience.

We have found that the provisions have not actually been used, but I think it is important for Canadians to have these tools remain in the toolbox to fight terrorism.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first I would like to say that you have a strong competitor in the person of the member for Leeds—Grenville, who chaired this sub-committee and demonstrated his ability to be impartial and understanding. At times, these discussions were extremely difficult. I believe that he will recognize that we delved into the matter in great detail and that all points of view were calmly expressed. It is unfortunate to note that the media ignore us when there are no petty politics.

I believe that the member for Niagara West—Glanbrook asked a question of the member for Laval—Les Îles, a question that was quite relevant in these circumstances. I would like to put that question to the chair of our sub-committee, the member for Leeds—Grenville.

What is the use of these committees? Why did we study these matters for hours and hours? Why did we try to reach a consensus whenever possible? Why did we immerse ourselves in so many reports to end up with ten majority recommendations and then find that the government has not retained even one? What was the purpose of all this work by a committee that was chaired in an exemplary manner? Why did we waste our time? The government does not know how to listen to those it consults.

●(1250)

[*English*]

Mr. Gord Brown: Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the member for all his very thoughtful work on the committee. He knows, as do other members of the committee, the many hours that have gone into reviewing this very important legislation, which many Canadians are watching very closely. They want to know the results.

The fact is the sunset provision motion, which has been forwarded to the House, was unable to be amended. The hon. member will know that work is still ongoing. I expect that we will be done in the very near future and that we will bring forward those recommendations. I hope at that point the government would bring forward some of those recommendations and allow the House to vote on them.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have been listening, with interest, to this debate. It seems to me that we are talking about striking a balance between personal liberties and public security.

The member has put forward, and it can be framed and termed in legalese or in more common parlance, the notion of some kind of pre-emptive arrest, which is contained in the bill, where someone can be taken into custody without charge and without presentation in front of the public or without representation. The personal security we all hope to enjoy, the ability to have freedom of movement and to not be arrested without charge, is offset against the notion of some potential future security threat. It seems somehow to parallel, and I do not say this glibly, the notion of pre-emptive war, the idea of a perceived threat from another nation would thereby condone an attack against that said nation.

This seems to have raised greater security threats in our world. It seems to have made our planet more insecure. One of the principles of dealing with each other, whether it is nation to nation or the citizenry to its government, is we presume innocence until proven otherwise. The notion of taking someone into custody, not presenting any charges, certainly not presenting anything into the public sphere, seems to tip the balance too far, that security must trump all individual pursuits. In a sense this allows the terrorists to truly win. When the U.S. changed its constitution, changed the notion of war and who had the right to do it, the terrorists won. He called up the spectre and images of 9/11.

When we do away with our personal civil liberties, we then truly give in to what the other side hopes to take advantage of. Could the member comment on that?

Mr. Gord Brown: Mr. Speaker, many Canadians have concerns about this impinging on civil liberties. I had concerns along those lines when I first was on the committee. After reviewing the testimony and recommendations from our law enforcement agencies and other folks who had made presentations to the former committee, I came to the conclusion that we were not ready to dispense with these provisions yet.

Statutory Order

I believe that another three years, along with the other recommendations and other legislation brought before the House, will contribute to safety for Canadians. I urge the hon. member to take the time to read the interim report because that is the basis of which the suggestions have come forward. At this point, only the recommendation to extend the sunset provisions has come forward because that motion was unable to be amended.

I know the government members and members of the opposition are working very hard on that committee and they are looking forward to bringing forward those recommendations to the House.

• (1255)

Mr. Dave Batters (Palliser, CPC): Mr. Speaker, from his conversations with the Liberal members opposite, who were also on the same subcommittee, the members for Etobicoke North and Scarborough Southwest, does the member believe they will vote with the government to support an extension of these provisions, which help in our national security, or will they be part of the Liberal flip-flop and do the opposite from what they did immediately following 9/11? Does the member believe the members of the committee will continue to vote in the same fashion as they did at committee?

Mr. Gord Brown: Mr. Speaker, I would never speculate on how Liberal members might ultimately vote on a motion or a bill in the House. I would be very disappointed—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): Order, please. Resuming debate, the hon. member for Etobicoke North.

Hon. Roy Cullen (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, being the member for Etobicoke North, I will not be saying how I will be voting either on this matter.

I am pleased to enter the debate on this motion that has been brought before the House by the Conservative Party to extend for a period of three years the provisions related to preventive arrests and investigative hearings.

I serve on the subcommittee and in fact I served on the subcommittee in the previous Parliament as well. We agreed to revive the former testimony from the last Parliament so that we could get on with the recommendations. We are working still very feverishly on the main body of the report. Unfortunately we had to uncouple the provisions related to investigative hearings and preventive arrests because they have the sunset clauses. I believe they will sunset this week. Those provisions had to be uncoupled from the main body of the report and that is why they are on the floor of the House today.

I know that the committee is doing a lot of hard work on the Anti-terrorism Act generally. There will be a report at some point, hopefully in the not too distant future, which I think will respond to many of the concerns raised by many Canadians.

I am disappointed that the government has chosen to ignore the 10 recommendations of the subcommittee and has brought in only two of the recommendations. In fact, the two recommendations with respect to extending the provisions differ from the recommendations of the subcommittee. The subcommittee recommended that they be extended for five years. We did that because we know how long it takes to review these provisions. These are very complex matters.

They require a lot of testimony and witnesses on both sides of the issue. If there was a three year review, I would suggest that some subcommittee would have to begin that review almost immediately.

Some of the other recommendations were more of a housekeeping nature, but there were a couple of recommendations that were important and the government has chosen to ignore them. I raise the same concern as my colleague from the Bloc. I am hoping that as we are putting in this effort at the subcommittee that the government will actually listen to what the subcommittee has to say.

On a general theme, it is very difficult to get balance in life. That could be at a personal level. How does one balance one's professional life and career with a family? How do we balance so many different competing demands on us as citizens? That is very true, in fact more profoundly true, for governments and parliaments when they have to find the right balance between protecting their citizens against threats to their security, whether those threats are internal or external, and balancing that against the legitimate rights of Canadians to have their civil liberties protected and respected, for their privacy rights to be respected, and for their rights and freedoms to be protected. It is never an easy task and it will never be an easy task. It was not an easy task in 2001 and it is not an easy task here today when we are presented with these issues.

It would be easy for me to hide behind the fact that I was on the subcommittee in both Parliaments. I heard all the testimony. In fact, I had the great honour to serve as parliamentary secretary to the minister of public safety and emergency preparedness in the last parliament. I am not going to hide behind all that because I think all of us in this House know what the issues are.

There are questions around the fight against terrorism and the protection of civil liberties. That is what it is about. At the committee we heard from both sides. We heard from civil libertarians that these provisions were excessive and we heard from many other witnesses that the provisions were necessary or in fact did not go far enough.

This is what life is about. We have to wrestle with these issues and we have to make some decisions.

What I would like to do first of all is to come back to the recommendations that the government, at this point and perhaps forever, has chosen to ignore.

• (1300)

What the subcommittee recommended was that investigative hearings only be available when there is a reason to believe there is imminent peril that a terrorist offence will be committed. It surprised me to learn that right now an investigative hearing can be called into play when a terrorist act has already been committed. We challenged the government members at the time to bring forth evidence that would justify that provision, not just looking forward, but looking backward. We were not able to get that evidence, so we made that a recommendation.

Statutory Order

With respect to preventive arrest, we said that a peace officer must have reasonable grounds to believe a terrorism offence will be committed. The government has chosen at this point not to deal with that one. It is difficult, when the government comes in with two out of ten recommendations and two of the recommendations are different from what the subcommittee recommended, to respond to that.

In a general theme, my view is that since 2001, nothing much has changed. We still face the threat of terrorism. I would agree with my colleague from Leeds—Grenville that perhaps a terrorist threat is more complicated, more intense, more sophisticated than ever before. I do not think much has changed since 2001. If anything, the terrorist threat could be worse.

It is no secret that our forces are fighting in Afghanistan. That has many people not very happy with us. We are on the al-Qaeda list, not necessarily because of Afghanistan, but perhaps for other reasons as well. I do not believe that the terrorist threat has diminished very much, if at all. In fact, I think it has probably increased.

I can certainly respect the judgment of my colleagues in the House on this side and the other side that 2001 was a grand compromise. Many in the House felt that preventive arrest and investigative hearings were instruments that were too severe and, as a compromise, the sunset provisions were written into Bill C-36. Today, five years later, the debate is if they have not been used, they are not needed, and therefore that is why we did sunset them. That was the purpose of it. Because we were not comfortable with them back in 2001, and therefore we should be sunseting them.

I certainly respect that point of view. It is not a point of view I agree with, but that is what this place is all about, having debate. I do not agree with it because I believe that the other argument is equally or, in my judgment, more valid. If those provisions have not been used, then clearly the concerns of those in 2001 that maybe law enforcement or authorities would abuse these provisions has not been borne out. They have not been used. For me, that makes the case that we should extend them.

We know that with respect to investigative hearings there was a time during the Air-India inquiry when an investigative hearing was requested, but by the time the Supreme Court ruled, and the Supreme Court ruled that it was an appropriate instrument, it was too late because the Air-India work had been completed. That was a decision of the Supreme Court. The investigative hearings as a function have never been used, nor have preventive arrests.

Last summer 15 young people were arrested in the Toronto area. Some ask if the provisions of Bill C-36, the anti-terrorism legislation, were used. They were not used. Some argue that if they were not used, then why do we need them. It is a good debate.

What we are missing here is that there will be occasions when there is enough evidence to arrest people under the normal provisions of the Criminal Code, but we do know that with terrorism offences, sometimes all that the security people or the law enforcement people are seeing is maybe email messages, sometimes encoded, but they have a very strong feeling that some terrorist attack might be imminent. In a case like that, they might not have all

the evidence they need to arrest people under the current provisions of the code and they may need the provisions under Bill C-36.

•(1305)

I recall the testimony of the ombudsman from the United Kingdom who came to our committee. He basically oversees the anti-terrorism regime within the United Kingdom. When pressed about why these provisions were necessary, he used the analogy of when the police believe that a bank robbery is imminent, but they do not have a lot of evidence and they just put two and two together. The police have been around and have seen it all and can figure things out sometimes that something is about to happen. With a bank robbery, if they thought that something might be happening, they could stake out the bank and just watch for signs of suspicious activity.

This witness from the United Kingdom said, and I think he is so right, that with a terrorist attack we cannot stake out the place. If someone comes in with a bomb and blows up a building, it is too late because the person, who probably would look like any of us, would walk in and might have bombs or other terrorist instruments and therefore we cannot stake out the joint. We have to deal with it.

That is why these provisions were put into Bill C-36 and that is why I believe that they are still required.

I think there is misinformation circulating with respect to these provisions. There are already provisions in Canada's law that are equivalent for example to investigative hearings. Investigative hearings are investigatory and not intended to determine criminal liability within the context of the law related to public inquiries, competition, income tax and mutual legal assistance in criminal matters. There are already provisions for investigative hearings in those areas.

With respect to recognizances with conditions, that is preventive arrest, there are equivalents with respect to peace bonds that are issued to deal with anticipated violent offences, sexual offences and criminal organization offences.

Both these legislative measures, preventive arrest and investigative hearings, already have some grounding in the criminal law of Canada. Unfortunately, these provisions themselves do not apply to terrorism offences so they had to be written into the law to be applicable to terrorism offences.

The member for Leeds—Grenville chaired the subcommittee. I was surprised that he was not able to have all 10 recommendations dealt with by his government. That is a disappointing aspect for me.

With the reports coming out of the Maher Arar inquiry, we are anticipating increasing demands for oversight over the RCMP and over CSIS. In fact, it was our Liberal government in the last Parliament that tabled a bill to set up a committee of parliamentarians to oversee our national security policy and agenda. I am hoping the government proceeds with that legislation or something akin to it because I think it is appropriate to have these oversights.

Statutory Order

The drafting of the bill was worked out with all the parties in the House in the last Parliament. Whether it would have the support of all parties in this Parliament I do not know, but I suspect many of the same people are around and that we could reach some agreement on what should be in a national security committee of parliamentarians. I think more oversight is needed and that would be an important step.

Also, the Maher Arar inquiry has recommended certain initiatives to increase the oversight of our agencies: CSIS, the RCMP and perhaps the Canada Border Services Agency.

We also need to deal with some concerns by Canadians about the sort of star chamber aspects of some of the provisions of Bill C-36 and also the security certificates. Even though security certificates are outside the realm of Bill C-36, the subcommittee, in its wisdom or lack thereof, decided to include security certificates. I know that these are of much concern to many Canadians. The government refers to them as a three-walled cell. People can be detained under security certificates if they pose a national security threat to Canada but they are free to leave at any point in time. There are star chamber elements about that and I would like to see those dealt with.

● (1310)

There are also questions from various charitable organizations, and I think rightfully so, that feel they could be delisted when something inadvertently happens even though they applied the due diligence that would normally be expected.

There are many things that we can do to deal with the balance between civil liberties and the need to protect society against threats. In fact, I think there is a lot of outreach that the government and all parliamentarians should be doing. Under the previous Liberal government, we started a major dialogue with the Muslim community in Canada. I attended a meeting with the then prime minister, the member for LaSalle—Émard, when we met with 35 imams from across Canada. These imams were speaking out against the violence in the United Kingdom in which terrorists bombed buses and innocent people lost their lives.

These imams spoke out against that violence, so the then prime minister and my colleagues and I met with these imams, first to thank them and congratulate them for speaking out against violence and the injuries to and deaths of innocent bystanders, but also to begin a dialogue on how to reach and connect with the Muslim community in Canada. In my riding of Etobicoke North, I have the third largest Muslim community in Canada. These people are very much against violence and against injury to and the death of innocent bystanders. The imam there spoke out against that as well.

We need to do more. I think we need to do more at our border. We know what the policy is: no racial profiling. But we know about, and I have heard of, real life experiences of people coming across our border who have been treated unjustly, unfairly and with a discriminatory sort of bent. That is why our government launched the fairness initiative, which would have given everybody coming across our border an outlet to go to if they felt they were treated unjustly or discourteously at our border. They would have had an objective observer to complain to, where those matters would be dealt with and disciplinary action would be taken if that was what was uncovered. I hope the Conservative government introduces that.

We started a consultation process under the previous Liberal government, but I do not see anything coming forward to give people dignity and respect at our borders and to cut out racial profiling. Threat profiling? Absolutely. Racial profiling? Never. We should not allow that. We can take measures to start to deal with that.

We need to do more work. The government needs to orchestrate this with CSIS, the RCMP and the Canada Border Services Agency to redo the outreach to these communities, because there is a lot of misinformation. There is a lot of miscommunication. I do not mean to single out the Muslim community, but the Muslim community is affected. We have to deal with that. Muslims are largely affected. There are some misunderstandings. There is some miscommunication going on. We need to deal with it.

I hope this government seizes upon those opportunities to dialogue with the Muslim community, because the vast majority of the Muslim community is made up of peace-loving people. They too want peace and security in Canada. They tell me, “We live in this country as well, and we want peace and security for ourselves and our children and our children's children”. We need to do more dialogue and outreach. As I said, our Liberal government started that process, but I think much more needs to be done.

Twenty or more years ago now, in Canada we witnessed the Air-India terrorist attack, so anyone who argues that Canada is immune from a terrorist attack just simply does not get it, in my judgment. We cannot be naive about these things. These terrorist organizations are very organized. They are prepared to do whatever it takes to make their point.

To wrap up, nothing much has changed since 2001, in my judgment. I think we still have terrorist threats. While we do not like to infringe on civil liberties, in my judgment the balance is still appropriate. It is not Draconian in my view. I think it is still necessary to ensure that we protect our citizens, give them peace and security and, at the same time, reach a good balance with their civil liberties.

● (1315)

Mr. Dave Batters (Palliser, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take the time to commend the member for Etobicoke North for the great work he has done on committee.

After all, as my friend pointed out, there has to be some use for committees in this place. Our committees need to have some teeth. At committee members hear from all the witnesses and are the experts on this issue. The member for Etobicoke North is not going to flip-flop on the issue, as will many members opposite. I would like to ask the member a brief question.

Statutory Order

For compelling reasons, he voted that the investigative hearing and recognizance with condition powers should be extended for five years. Given that he believes these measures should be extended for five years, and given that we are debating whether they should be extended for three years, will he commit today to meeting with the leader of the official opposition and discussing the matter with him, discussing the witnesses' testimony that he heard at committee and the reasons why, in his expert opinion as a committee member, these provisions should be extended? Will he perhaps write to the rest of his colleagues as well and express that? Will he meet with the leader of the official opposition and explain his perspective?

Hon. Roy Cullen: Mr. Speaker, let me say first of all to the member for Palliser that I will respect the point of view of the members of our official opposition who will vote against this motion, because this is not a black and white situation although for me it is black and white. For many of my colleagues it is black and white as well. In fact, many of them will say that in 2001 that was the compromise, that putting in of the preventative arrest and the investigative hearing. Now that they have not been used, they are not needed, they say, so that was the whole idea of the sunset. That is not my judgment, but I respect that judgment.

As I said earlier, I am not going to hide behind all the testimony I heard. I heard testimony on both sides of this issue. What it comes down to is that we have to make individual choices. Our leader knows full well my views on this. That is political life. We win some and we lose some.

I am not sure how my colleagues in the House are going to vote, but I certainly can respect different points of view. My own point of view is that these provisions are still necessary.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let me tell my colleague and namesake that, having lived in the riding of Etobicoke North for a number of years, I know his riding well. I know the diverse community that he represents. There are a number of different views and a number of different origins. People from around the planet have chosen to reside in what is no longer the city of Etobicoke after amalgamation but the great beast of Toronto.

The question I have for the member is a serious one. A government member just rose to say that committees must have more teeth. Since coming here, I have felt that committees actually have quite a bit of influence over the direction of government. A minority Parliament certainly helps with that. In the dark days of Liberal majorities past, we know that committees could be whipped into a frenzy and directed by the central powers of the PMO, which was unfortunate for democracy, but right now committees have quite a bit of influence.

I am perplexed, though. The committee sent out 10 recommendations and the government has chosen to take up two, but my colleague seems satisfied by that. That is my first point.

Next, the sunset clause, he said in his speech, was in a sense a trade-off. This was born directly out of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. To that point, the conversation had not been held previously, to any great degree, in Canada or in America. I was not in the House at that time, but I remember watching and listening with great interest. The tone of the debate was elevated. It was heated. We had never seen

something like this before so close to home. Canadians had been killed. The intensity of the debate was quite extreme. The need to build this legislation was called for, but there was some measure of a cooling off period, with the five years given to re-decide.

The member raised the Arar case, which is what my question is about. We saw with the Maher Arar case that mistakes were made. Assumptions were made on the basis of ethnicity and location. Wrong information was spread by our own authorities, with no oversight at all, yet built into the act and into these provisions is the same room for it to happen again. I do not know how he can call forward the name of Mr. Arar as an example. The NDP defended him from the start while other members in this House were confused as to his guilt. Why would the member see this bill as not needing a proper review and—

• (1320)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): The hon. member for Etobicoke North.

Hon. Roy Cullen: Mr. Speaker, let me say to the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley that in the subcommittee we are looking at all other aspects of Bill C-36. It is a very comprehensive review. That report will be finished in the not too distant future. Really, I hope the government looks at that report seriously.

With respect to Mr. Arar, my argument would be that these provisions have not been used. If the provisions of investigative hearings and preventive arrests had been abused since 2001 until today, I would be the first one to say we should sunset them. In my judgment, and I think in the general consensus, they have not been abused because they have not been used.

Therefore, my argument would be that because they parallel many of the provisions currently available in the Criminal Code, although they are not precisely what is needed under Bill C-36 and that is why they were written in, my argument would be that they have not been abused, they are still needed, and they therefore should be extended.

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Etobicoke North practices the same profession as my father. He is a chartered accountant. Accordingly, I will ask him for an approximate value.

Can he imagine himself in the shoes of someone who is a victim of one of these errors? In law, we often look for certitudes. In this case, we are indicating that we can act on reasonable grounds. Furthermore, the judge can incarcerate someone simply because the grounds seem well-founded. This is serious. One day or another, we will certainly make mistakes.

If the hon. member for Etobicoke North fell victim to such an error, having been labelled a terrorist, the undertaking he would be required to give the court would mean that he would lose his right to travel by plane, he would probably lose his job, he would lose a great deal.

How much compensation would he ask for?

Hon. Roy Cullen: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague, the hon. member for Marc-Aurèle-Fortin. I appreciate his question.

As I was saying at the beginning of my speech, there is always a balance between protecting citizens against terrorist attacks and protecting the civil liberties of Canadians.

[English]

That is not very easy, and I am not going to get into the question of compensation today, but would like to point out that some think these investigative hearings and preventive arrests are done without application to a judge. That could not be further from the truth.

If anyone is invited to an investigative hearing, it has to be with the prior consent of the Attorney General, and an application can be made to a superior court or provincial court judge for an order for the gathering of information. This thus has the approval of the Attorney General and the approval of a provincial court judge. There also are many protections with respect to investigative hearings. People cannot incriminate themselves and also they have a right to legal counsel.

With respect to preventive arrests, again it is with the prior consent of the Attorney General that peace officers can carry out these arrests, but they must bring these people before a provincial court judge within 24 hours. A provincial court judge would have to be confident that these people need to be detained, the prosecution or authorities would have to show cause, and the judge might put conditions on the arrest or how they might behave after that. I think it is wrong to suggest that these people do not have access to counsel or that judges and the Attorney General are not involved in this.

• (1325)

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the members of the opposition who took part in the subcommittee report. The broader community should know that a great deal of the study was done before this Parliament convened. The members on this side of the House were all new to the committee and we received a great deal of assistance from the opposition, for which we are thankful.

I am pleased to stand today to show support for the three year extension of the provisions of the Anti-terrorism Act that deals with preventive arrest and investigative hearings. I do so with the knowledge of the critical importance of these provisions for the work of law enforcement agencies across the country.

As a former police officer, I understand what a difficult job it can be to keep Canadians safe. I also understand the need to do everything possible to get that job done. Canada's new government has made the safety of Canadians one of its top priorities.

Over the past few months, the government has taken many steps to bolster the security of Canadians. We provided more funding to hire more federal police officers, to enact new measures to enhance the security of passenger rail and urban transit, to improve Canada's anti-money laundering and anti-terrorist financing regime, and to strengthen Canada's capacity to respond to catastrophes and emergencies of any kind.

We have also begun the process to arm border guards and to eliminate work alone border crossings. All these measures and others demonstrate the significance that we place on the security of

Canadians. The Anti-terrorism Act is important to our efforts and those of all stakeholders involved in keeping our country safe.

The Anti-terrorism Act was enacted in response to the tragic events that befell our American neighbours on September 11, 2001. On that day we realized that we were not as prepared as we had thought to deal with such devastating acts of terrorism.

The Anti-terrorism Act provided some of the tools we needed to root out terrorists and prevent our nation from falling victim to their cowardly crimes. We needed them then and we still need them now, measures to allow us to stop such events before they happen. That is why, in my opinion, recognizance with conditions and investigative hearings are crucial.

There is an old adage that definitely fits this bill, "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure". I believe most Canadians would agree and they would do so because they understand that these provisions are not used every day, that they are to be used in extreme circumstances.

To use recognizance with conditions and investigative hearing provisions, law enforcement professionals must adhere to precise criteria. In the case of recognizance with conditions, it can only be used where there are reasonable grounds to believe that a terrorist activity will be carried out and reasonable grounds to suspect that imposing conditions or arrest is necessary to prevent the carrying out of the terrorist activity.

The threat must be credible and involve a specific individual. The consent of the attorney general must be obtained. In all cases, the person in question must be brought before a judge within 24 hours or as soon as possible. In order for the investigative hearing provisions to be used, the judge must be satisfied that the consent of the attorney general is obtained and that, among other things, there are reasonable grounds to believe that a terrorist offence has been or will be committed.

In addition, during the hearing the witness is protected from self-incrimination and laws relating to privilege and the non-disclosure of information, as well as the right to counsel, continue to apply.

As all members of the House can see, these provisions are subject to strict checks and balances. This is consistent with our values. The rights and freedoms that we hold dear as a nation have been integrated into the development of these measures.

The fact that these provisions are not used often does not mean they are not needed. Some people may believe that because we use these provisions so infrequently they are not necessary. That is dangerous and even irresponsible reasoning. We do not pass laws against grievous crimes in the hopes of having to use them. We, rather, hope that we never need to use them.

Statutory Order

Statutory Order

However, there are instances where these laws are necessary. Having ways of dealing with the most extreme of events, however infrequent, is vital to keeping our society safe. Removing these provisions because we have not used them is like saying that we do not need air bags in our cars because we are very good drivers. These provisions are there against the eventuality that using them will save lives and will bring those who commit or plan to commit these cowardly, indiscriminate acts of destruction to justice.

● (1330)

Keeping these provisions is the responsible thing to do and the right thing to do. Should something terrible happen on our soil I do not believe Canadians would accept the excuse that we got rid of preventive measures because they had not been used enough in the past. I know I would not.

Extending the sunset provisions of the Anti-terrorism Act for a period of three years is a necessary part of our duty as legislators. Back in 2001, members of Parliament understood the tremendous need for this act and all of its provisions. The tragic events of September of that same year were fresh in our minds. Images of the collapsing towers were burned in our minds. We remember the thousands of innocent Americans and 25 Canadians who lost their lives needlessly.

While those wounds run deep, time has passed and we have healed a great deal. However, since that time, 30 countries have been victims of terrorism: England, Spain, Russia, and the list goes on. We have a duty to our people to learn from these terrible events, to be prepared and to take steps to keep Canadians safe in light of the horrific nature of terrorist crimes. We cannot be complacent. We cannot let ourselves believe that our country is immune. We have been mentioned as a possible target by certain groups.

I am not here to be a fearmonger but I want to make it clear that we need to have these provisions. Police officers must be able to count on effective tools when they carry out their work. They need to know that they can indeed take steps to keep us all safe.

The government does support our police forces and all those who work tirelessly to track down terrorists, uncover plots and protect our families. These provisions make that work easier. We should not create unnecessary challenges and burdens for our law enforcement officials.

The question before us today is simple: Do we continue to provide the tools needed by police to counter terrorism or do we take those tools away and help stack the deck against our own country? I know where I stand. I stand with the country, with Canadians and with our security professionals who put their lives on the line in what is the most civic of duties, the protection of our security and our prosperity.

I urge all members of the House to stand with me as we extend the preventive arrest and investigative hearing provisions of the Anti-terrorism Act.

I will end with a quote by the former minister of justice and public safety dealing with the Anti-terrorism Act. She said:

We have reviewed the legislation in detail. It has gone through the most intense scrutiny in terms of whether or not it is consistent with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. We believe that this law is consistent.

That was taken from *Hansard*, November 27, 2001.

Hon. Robert Thibault (West Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his discussion, participation and contribution to the debate. It is always a difficult question when we look at it as reducing somebody's rights to protect the public.

I was part of the debate when the original bill went through. At that time we had a sunset clause so the debate would happen again and we would have an evaluation as to whether it was necessary to reduce the rights of individuals to protect society and to have preventive detention the hearings if we had reasonable grounds.

However, nobody felt too great about reducing rights. Now we have had five years experience and they have not been invoked because it has not been necessary. Officers of the law have made arrests in Toronto and they have used existing and other provisions of our Criminal Code and our legal system to protect Canadians.

Now we come to that discussion again. In light of not having had to use it, does the member feel that it is necessary to keep this or are there systems in place where the law protection organizations can protect us adequately?

● (1335)

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Mr. Speaker, the Criminal Code contains many laws that govern a great deal of what Canadians can and cannot do, and most of those laws do not have a sunset clause.

The sunset clause in this case was put in for us to have that opportunity to review what has happened in the five years since its implementation. The fact that it has not been used does not mean that it is not a good tool to have in the tool box. As a matter of fact, I suggest that it is a wonderful tool to have there.

The subcommittee viewed it in the light that although it had not been used that it should be retained. Our original intent was that it would stay for another five years so it would have a full ten years of experience in the country.

However, with all due respect, I believe that the past five years has proven it to be such a good idea that it should be retained. I think Canadians expect us as legislators to provide those tools for the law enforcement community in the battle against terrorism.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ): Mr. Speaker, once again, I am going to turn to the expertise of a member whom I know well. I know he worked for the police for many years. I think he was even chief of police.

I would like to ask him whether he has truly thought about some of what happened to Maher Arar. At first, Mr. Arar met with investigators several times. He answered many of their questions and, at one point, he had had enough and said, "I do not want to continue without a lawyer present". From that moment on, the police stopped asking him questions.

Was this not a case where the police should have let him see a lawyer, who would have explained the provisions of the interrogations and that his rights were protected? Eventually, he appeared before a judge. Why did the police not exercise these new powers they were given?

When police are given powers, it is generally not the police we have in mind that we are worried about.

We understand that so far the police have not abused the law. Nonetheless, sooner or later others who do not need it will end up using it and putting basic liberties at risk. In my opinion, the police do not want to interrogate someone in the presence of a judge and a lawyer.

[English]

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for all his help during the subcommittee process that we just went through.

With regard to police officers and the relationship with accused or persons in custody and lawyers, as illustrated in the case of which he spoke, a lawyer could have been present if he had asked. The hon. member has already indicated that the conversation ended when there was talk of a lawyer being there. I do not think there is any question that anybody's rights to legal counsel have been removed or somehow hindered in this process.

However, he is right that lawyers frequently enter into discussions with accused and police officers or people being arrested. As a member of the bar, I think my friend would tell us that usually the conversations were as a result of the lawyer's intervention.

• (1340)

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member opposite during his speech used the phrase, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure". It is interesting that he used that particular terminology because the wrong medicine can actually harm a patient. Using that sort of simplistic approach, especially when we talk about legislative tools, preventative arrest and investigative hearing, which are actually, if we look at it in medical terminology, quite toxic with regard to our Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

We had tremendous qualms about passing that legislation at that time. That is why the only reason it passed with the support of the Progressive Conservative members at that time was because of the sunset clause. We did not know what illness we were dealing with. We were in the post-9/11 world.

I would like to know first of all whether or not the member agrees that this particular medicine undermines the principles of our Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Then secondly, I did not have a chance to question his colleague who spoke previously but I would like to know his thoughts. The Conservative member who spoke previously when speaking to this issue made a comparison with the U.S. approach and U.S. legislation. He was quite laudatory in terms of the U.S. approach. What are the member's thoughts on that one?

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Mr. Speaker, obviously the toxicity here is in terrorism. There are provisions within the Criminal Code for other arrest provisions dealing with the prevention of crime. I see nothing in this act that abridges any of that. I draw the member's attention to

Statutory Order

the former minister of justice and public safety who said in *Hansard* on October 16, 2001:

Canadians can rest assured that we kept in mind the rights and freedoms guaranteed in the charter when drafting our proposals. The bill reaffirms the equal right of every citizen of whatever religion, race or ethnic origin to enjoy the security, protections and liberties shared by all Canadians.

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is very interesting to listen to the debate. I remind those who are watching via television that it was the Liberals that put this into place and guaranteed that the rights would not be violated and so far they have not been.

However, I see a flip-flop on the other side now which concerns me. They have argued that because it has not been used, let us scrap it. At the same time it has not been abused either. I think that is something that we have to keep in mind, that our law enforcement officials are not going out there and misusing the provisions of this act.

I also hear the Maher Arar situation being dragged in here. Perhaps my hon. colleague could comment on this. I do not see the Maher Arar situation being the result of anything that was abused in this bill and maybe he can clarify that.

I think that we should have a concern about becoming too comfortable because there has not been a problem in the last five years. This legislation is there in case we really need it. Perhaps my hon. colleague could comment on those points.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Mr. Speaker, it is important to note that this legislation has not been utilized to this point. I think what is equally important is that this should be renewed for a further three years, so that all the implications of the subcommittee's report and ultimately the committee's report can be brought forward before the House so that the House can make decisions on where we go from here.

[Translation]

Ms. Denise Savoie (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to this motion to extend investigative hearings and preventive arrest under the sunset clause introduced in 2002.

I was not here at the time, but after listening to the little bit of debate held on the matter, these measures seem to me to be the product of an overreaction, which occurred in a moment of panic following the events of September 11, 2001.

It is the responsibility of parliamentarians to do everything in their power to protect Canadians, taking whatever effective measures are needed to do so.

Today, we must first ask ourselves if these measures are effective or necessary. It seems increasingly clear to me that they are neither effective nor necessary, nor even desirable. This bill does nothing to combat terrorism.

Statutory Order

• (1345)

[English]

It must be fought in a different way. It has been suggested that it could be more useful to fight with coordinated intelligence services. Evidence has demonstrated it just was not present. One of the things we saw clearly at the time, for example, in the Air-India investigation was that our investigative and intelligence services were not only not coordinated, but they were working at cross purposes with each other.

We learned many things through this process that, among other things, coordinated services and intelligence services were necessary on the ground along with combined appropriate police work.

This kind of terrorist action must be fought internationally and nationally. Internationally, I might say, by charting a path for peace. Pre-emptive actions, such as these measures provide, are not only disruptive, but they have been shown, as in the case of the pre-emptive strikes in Iraq, to be unsuccessful in calming or mitigating terrorism. They have only served to inflame it.

Have these measures been effective or even necessary? We found out that they have not been successfully used. One attempt was made, but was unsuccessful and only served to further draw out a legal process. That, perhaps, is indicative of the lack of need.

As leading peace advocate Ursula Franklin has described, such measures are maybe effective, but effective to create a climate of fear, and that is surely not the basis on which our country is founded. We should be looking instead at terrorism from a wider perspective and reassess how it is that we can best protect our citizens without ceding ground to terrorists.

It has been suggested by some of my colleagues that better coordinated intelligence services, as I have already mentioned, would be the first step where we need to put more resources. We have also learned that what we really need is more people on the ground, on the street, doing traditional intelligence gathering. That may be something that we should be looking at instead of invoking these extraordinary measures that strike at the very core of our rights and freedoms in Canada.

It has been shown by a minority report at the time of the discussion that this legislation is perhaps not only not effective, but not necessary, that according to section 495 of the Criminal Code, peace officers may arrest without warrant a person who, on reasonable grounds, they believe is about to commit an indictable offence. The arrested person must then be brought before a judge, who may impose the same conditions as those imposable under the Anti-terrorism Act. Judges may even refuse bail if they believe that the person's release might jeopardize public safety.

We have clear indications that we have presently, within the Criminal Code provisions, effective actions in the case of suspected plots. I just want to continue from the minority report. It states that if police officers believe that a person is about to commit an act of terrorism, then they have knowledge of the plot, obviously.

• (1350)

They probably know, based on wiretap or other surveillance information, that an indictable offence is about to be committed.

Therefore, they have proof of a plot or attempt, and need only lay a charge in order to arrest the person in question. It would therefore seem that the kinds of measures that are being asked for, one of which is an extension, are not necessary.

[Translation]

Considering the infringement on our rights and freedoms, I believe that there must be more than just reasonable grounds. We need to see conditions that do not exist at this time. The measures required today or that the government is asking us to adopt could in no way help to resolve the much more serious problem of terrorism.

It would be better to focus on finding a path towards peace. On an international scale, Canada should take steps in that direction, with its allies, including the United States. Instead of investing heavily in the war industry, as is currently the case, we should instead be thinking of finding ways to work together in order to discover the underlying causes of terrorism.

[English]

It seems clear that those who give way to terrorism are those who are also facing an injustice. If Canada were to perhaps look at the commitment that it has not yet fulfilled with respect to foreign aid, that would be one way of addressing some of these issues.

If we really want to give a sense of security to our citizens and to the residents of Canada, then we must do so by applying some of the methods that are already at our disposal according to the Criminal Code, looking beyond the traditional framework, and really considering some of the causes of terrorism and addressing some of the profound causes of injustice.

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to my friend's comments with regard to the Anti-terrorism Act and I wonder if she would comment on two aspects of the act.

First, there was an inference by the hon. member and another before her that this act was somehow in response to the influence of certain great powers on the face of the earth who may be close to Canada. I am wondering if she would like to comment on the fact that it was as a result of the United Nations passing resolution 1373 just after September 11. It was not one or two powerful countries, it was all of the civilized world that actually requested in the strongest possible way that countries address terrorism through legislation and other means.

I wonder if she would also comment on the Supreme Court's finding, which stated that the provisions of investigative hearings were totally within the jurisdiction or according to the charter. It said:

Consequently, the challenge for a democratic state's answer to terrorism calls for a balancing of what is required for an effective response to terrorism in a way that appropriately recognizes the fundamental values of the rule of law. In a democracy, not every response is available to meet the challenge of terrorism. At first blush, this may appear to be a disadvantage, but in reality, it is not. A response to terrorism within the rule of law preserves and enhances the cherished liberties that are essential to democracy.

I wonder if the hon. member would like to respond.

Statements by Members

•(1355)

Ms. Denise Savoie: Mr. Speaker, if I could ask for your indulgence, when I started my comments, I forgot to mention that I would be splitting my time with the member for Nanaimo—Cowichan.

On my colleague's question, it was clear at the time that all parliamentarians in western countries, in western democracies, faced a very difficult situation. It also seems that we have, in history, faced this kind of situation before and we continually repeat some of the mistakes that were made.

We live in a country for whom the rule of law is one of the most important pieces and fundamental principles of our country. There is no question that it was a difficult situation, but the reaction went beyond the bounds of what was necessary at the time.

Mr. Derek Lee (Scarborough—Rouge River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we may run out of time, but I want to pose a question to the member. It is one of these “what if” questions under this legislation.

What if a foreign signals intelligence agency reports to Canada's signals intelligence agency, CSE, that it believes there is an imminent attack, but it only has a reference to a location, or a computer server or a residence? It has no names, no persons, only evidence of an imminent attack.

Would the member try to describe to us how police officers, who are not even in the loop yet in my hypothetical, will be able to respond quickly to deal with that threat, if they need to have the reasonable grounds necessary under normal Criminal Code provisions to obtain any kind of arrest warrant? In this case, we may not even have a name.

Could she please explain how a government could enable a pre-emptive response to block the imminent threat?

Ms. Denise Savoie: Mr. Speaker, I am not a policeman and I do not claim to be. However, it seems clear, from reading section 495 of the Criminal Code, that a peace officer may act without warrant, there may be reasonable grounds. I do not think rule of law covers every possible detail. There is some latitude for police to act.

As was stated earlier, our intelligence agencies, with more work on the ground and more additional resources to them, can work effectively with the kind of problem he has suggested.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

•(1400)

[English]

2010 OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC GAMES

Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are now three years away from the 2010 Vancouver-Whistler Olympic and Paralympic Games. Today the countdown clock was unveiled in Vancouver. As the seconds, minutes, hours and days are counted down, excitement will grow for all Canadians. Venues are being completed, infrastructure is being built and our athletes are training for gold.

The 2010 Vancouver-Whistler Olympic and Paralympic Games are going to be a success story for all Canadians from coast to coast.

This government is working closely with the governments of British Columbia, Vancouver, Whistler, the host first nations and the Vancouver Olympic organizing committee to host the greatest winter Olympic games in Olympic history.

The countdown clock unveiled today will count us down to the moment when Canada and British Columbia will shine for all the world to see at the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic games.

* * *

HEALTH

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, almost one year after the government took power, the Wait Time Alliance released its report card on the medical wait times commitments made in the first ministers agreement. The Alliance gave the government an incomplete grade for failing to create one pan-Canadian wait times strategy.

The Prime Minister's own election platform in 2006 promised to implement this strategy as one of his five priorities. Yet, here we are, we have no strategy, no benchmarks and no guarantees.

Even worse, the Minister of Health recently stated that he could foresee no deadline and insisted that it would take as long as it takes.

The government's lack of concern on this file is threatening medicare itself. Dr. Colin McMillan, president of the CMA, stated that:

—incomplete information and reporting greatly undermines the public's confidence in their political leaders to sustain positive action on wait times.

Opponents of universal medicare are using these delays to justify the creation of a two tier health system. Surgeons at private clinics in Quebec are already billing medicare and patients at the same time. Shame.

Is this the government's hidden agenda after all?

* * *

[Translation]

MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY

Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, according to several analysts, Quebec's manufacturing sector could lose over 25,000 jobs this year.

The Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology tabled a report on new challenges facing the manufacturing sector. “Moving Forward - Rising to the Challenge” recommends that the federal government take action on issues such as trade and research and development policy to protect the jobs that are at stake.

But this government is still refusing to act because it thinks that the free market will fix everything and that government intervention will just hobble industry.

Statements by Members

As the committee recommended in its report, the government should act quickly to stimulate corporate modernization and use the international trade tools at its disposal to give our industries the time and the tools they need to adapt and take on new challenges.

* * *

[English]

CHILD CARE

Ms. Denise Savoie (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it has been one year since the Conservative government abandoned the child care agreements, and parents in British Columbia are suffering the consequences.

The British Columbia Liberals are downloading the \$533 million gap in federal support onto the backs of parents, who face average fee increases of at least \$600 per year, per child for shrinking numbers of spaces.

Victoria's valuable child care resource and referral centre, having just celebrated the opening of its facility, now faces closure in the fall.

Tomorrow, citizens across British Columbia will unite in a province-wide rally to protest the cuts and to demand federal-provincial cooperation in a national child care system.

I urge the government to finally open its mind and give parents a real choice for quality public child care. The NDP's early learning and child care act is the perfect blueprint and the government is welcome to borrow it.

* * *

YOUNG LEADERS IN RURAL CANADA AWARDS

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today the third annual Young Leaders in Rural Canada Awards ceremony will recognize four of Canada's finest young people. It is recognition of the tremendous role that they have played in their own rural communities.

Growing up in rural Canada today is a unique experience. In rural areas there is still a place for young people to step forward and to lead. The leaders we acknowledge today have worked with family, friends and neighbours to better their towns and villages. These four young rural Canadians see opportunities where others see challenges.

Canada's new government wants to celebrate the successes of these rural youth who have dedicated their passion, spirit and skills to strengthening rural, remote and northern communities. That is why I am pleased to mention the award recipients, who are: Diane Carey of Tracadie-Shiela, New Brunswick; Noba Anderson of Mansons Landing, British Columbia; Luella Chiasson, who grew up in Belle Cote, Nova Scotia but now lives in Sydney; and Heather Muir of Walkerton, Ontario, who will be receiving an honourable mention.

Canada's new government is very proud of these young individuals and wishes them all the best for their futures.

● (1405)

VETERANS

Hon. Albina Guarnieri (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in 2005 Canada kept its promise to honour our veterans with the Year of the Veteran and the new veteran's charter.

However, 2006 was a year of broken promises to veterans, a year when the new Conservative government went AWOL on its pre-election commitment to extend VIP services to all widows of second world war veterans, while it also breached the Prime Minister's personal pledge to compensate each and every veteran of Gagetown who could have been exposed to defoliants.

Canada's veterans felt a duty to deliver for their country. They deserve better than a government that sadly deserts its commitments and delivers only broken promises.

* * *

SENATE TENURE LEGISLATION

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my constituents in Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound have some very strong opinions about the Senate. In fact, a survey in my riding has revealed that 86% of respondents want Senate reform.

There is currently a bill before the Senate to limit the terms of senators to eight years. A special Senate committee has endorsed term limits for senators and the Leader of the Opposition is on record as saying that he also supports this important initiative.

However, here we sit 258 days into a Liberal filibuster with no end in sight. What is worse, the unelected, unaccountable Liberal dominated Senate continues to adjourn debate every day. What do Liberal senators have against accountability?

This is not rocket science. The bill consists of only 66 words, three clauses and one simple concept.

The people have spoken. It is what Canadians want and it is the right thing to do. When will the Leader of the Opposition put an end to these shenanigans and tell his Senate colleagues to pass Bill S-4?

* * *

[Translation]

48TH ANNUAL QUEBEC CITY INTERNATIONAL PEEWEE HOCKEY TOURNAMENT

Mr. Luc Malo (Verchères—Les Patriotes, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Quebec City is a world hockey capital. Rendez-vous '87 was held 20 years ago, and now the city is preparing to host the 2008 World Hockey Championship.

Since 1960, Quebec City has also been hosting the International Pee-wee Hockey Tournament, the biggest minor hockey tournament in the world. This event brings 2,300 players aged 11 and 12 to our provincial capital and gives them the opportunity to experience the excitement of a major competition. Up to 220,000 people are expected to attend the games between now and February 18.

Kids from here and elsewhere who participate in the tournament will have an unforgettable experience: the competitive yet convivial atmosphere will enable them to share their passion for hockey and develop friendships that transcend borders.

Today, I would like to thank all of the families who are making this event possible by billeting young hockey players and offering them the warmth of a second home.

* * *

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Mill Woods—Beaumont, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on Thursday the Liberal environment critic stood in the House and announced that he would talk about the Liberal environmental record.

My ears perked up as I anticipated some explanation regarding the devastating Liberal numbers: greenhouse gas emissions, a mind-blowing 35% above Canada's Kyoto targets; 28th out of 29 OECD countries in air quality rankings; and record numbers for smog advisory days in our cities.

There were no explanations, no new numbers, just more useless words and phrases. He talked not about action, but “platforms for action”. He talked about regulations, not implemented but “nearly released”. He said not that they got it done, but that after 13 years, they were “set to start operations”.

I suggest that the Liberal leader might want to convene a meeting of the Liberal best brain club and consider changing their motto on the environment from “We didn't get it done” to “We were just about to almost start thinking about calling a meeting to discuss the possibility of getting it done”.

* * *

• (1410)

[Translation]

KYOTO PROTOCOL IMPLEMENTATION ACT

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on Wednesday evening, Valentine's Day, the members of this House will be called on to vote one last time on my Bill C-288.

This bill seeks to force the government to meet Canada's commitments under the Kyoto protocol.

It is a bill that talks about the future, a bill that seeks to ensure that Canada takes tangible measures today for tomorrow, measures that the government does not want to take. Why worry about the future?

The government is totally isolated on this issue. The three opposition parties stand together on this important bill. In fact, all the

Statements by Members

parties except the Conservative Party want immediate action on climate change. That is why this bill is so necessary.

When a government respects neither international law nor the will of its own people, when it does not shoulder its responsibilities in response to one of the most serious challenges facing our planet, Parliament has the ability and the moral duty to force the government to do so. That is why this bill is so important.

* * *

[English]

ANTI-TERRORISM ACT

Mr. Gord Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have decided to gut their own anti-terrorism legislation of its key law enforcement powers to stop a terrorist attack before it occurs because they want the wording nuanced.

The opposition leader is famous for his inaction on priority issues. Now his priorities are wrong. He wants nuanced wording or he will vote to remove necessary anti-terrorism tools.

Ironically, the Anti-terrorism Act drafted by the previous Liberal government lays out the strict process for extending the sunset clauses which states that the motion to extend cannot be amended.

As chair of the subcommittee studying the act, I know the sunset provisions will expire before we complete our study and table our recommendations. These recommendations require a legislative response with a timeline that exceeds the imminent expiration of the sunset clauses.

Our motion seeking a three year extension is reasonable, responsible and in the best interests of Canadians.

* * *

[Translation]

SPECIAL OLYMPICS NEW BRUNSWICK WINTER GAMES

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, from February 15 to 18, the City of Bathurst will host athletes from across Atlantic Canada at the Special Olympics New Brunswick Winter Games.

More than 300 athletes and trainers will take part in this eagerly anticipated event. The trainers play a very important role, giving the athletes confidence and helping them discover that physical activity is fun.

Having the opportunity to train and take part in Special Olympics competitions enriches the lives of athletes with intellectual disabilities.

With its 300 volunteers, the City of Bathurst is ready to welcome these athletes, help them enjoy their Olympic experience and send them home with fond memories.

I invite the people in my riding and people from all around to come cheer on the athletes and make the games a success.

Good luck to all the athletes.

Oral Questions

[English]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Gary Merasty (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week we found out that the Indian affairs minister seems to consider taxpayer funded trips called personal and political by his department as more valuable than improving child welfare.

While he fancies himself as being the pipelines minister, he is dismissing the child welfare crisis. As well, a report on his own department's website warns that the current child services program lacks authority and funding to pursue effective care options. Perhaps the reason the minister would rather talk about pipelines than child welfare is that he knows he is responsible for the funding crunch hurting aboriginal children.

This past Wednesday the Calgary *Sun* quoted a source as saying that INAC is redirecting all non-core funding, such as funding for child-welfare services, to deal with the lack of funding for the water crisis.

Why is there no money for water? Because the minister refused to devote any new money and refuses to implement the Kelowna accord.

Canada's first nations, Métis and Inuit people deserve much better than the minister's complete lack of leadership.

* * *

[Translation]

CHILD SOLDIERS

Ms. Johanne Deschamps (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on February 5 and 6, 2007, 60 countries including Canada, and several NGOs attended a conference in Paris, chaired by UNICEF and France, to address the issue of child soldiers.

It is estimated that, at this time, there are approximately 250,000 children under the age of 18 implicated in more than 30 conflicts around the world.

The Bloc Québécois is calling on the Canadian government to implement the Paris commitments, which aim to prevent recruitment, release current child soldiers and help them regain the humanity they have lost.

Since 2002, the use of children under the age of 15 in conflicts has been recognized as a war crime by the International Criminal Court.

To close, I would like to share the words of Mr. Philippe Douste-Blazy, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, who said that children who know nothing but how to fight wars are "lost children, lost for peace and lost for the development of their countries".

* * *

●(1415)

[English]

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. Brent St. Denis (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the many communities and forest industry workers in my riding that depend on a strong forest sector,

and along with forest sector unions, I am calling on the government to convene a national summit on the forest industry. Such a summit could lead to the creation of a forest sector council for the pulp and paper and primary forest industries.

Also needed is a national stabilization fund to help communities and workers adequately make the transition during this time of evident change in this tremendously important sector, in order to protect jobs, save mills and to provide labour adjustment programs for workers impacted by job losses.

In a letter I wrote to the Prime Minister last year, I pointed out the flaws in the then draft Canada-U.S. softwood lumber agreement. I called upon him to adopt instead the \$1.5 billion forest industry strategy of the previous Liberal government, instead of the huge giveaway his government was planning.

What Canada's forest sector needs are measures similar to those proposed in the November 2005 strategy and a summit to help bring all the best ideas together. The forest sector needs action in the face of tremendous devastation.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

JUDICIAL APPOINTMENTS

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our courts are recognized around the world for their competence, fairness and independence, but today Canadians are expressing grave concerns about the Prime Minister's obvious manoeuvres to drastically change the composition of the committees that select our judges.

Canadians want our judges to continue being selected without political or ideological interference. Will the Prime Minister stop his shameless attempts to stack the committees with his ideological friends?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada's new government will continue to appoint judges based on merit and legal excellence with input from a broad range of stakeholders. In fact, as is known, the government has announced that it is getting representatives from the law enforcement community.

It is odd that the Leader of the Opposition would consider members of the law enforcement community to be rigid ideologues. We happen to believe they are people who know something about the justice system and have something to add. We think it is a good thing that they are being added to the judicial appointment process.

[Translation]

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during the election campaign last year, the Prime Minister said that he would never have "absolute power" because we have the courts to ensure a balance of power. The Prime Minister decided to upset that balance and is appointing his ideological friends to the committees that select judges. He is changing these committees by ensuring that his friends make up the majority.

Oral Questions

Will the Prime Minister stop manipulating these committees? Will he respect the independent nature of Canada's judicial system, as Canadians want?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are maintaining the balance, but we certainly remember when the Liberals were in power. There were phone calls to the Liberal Party's chief organizer for consultations concerning appointments. The Liberals never questioned the fact that their colleague, the hon. member for Mount Royal—Minister of Justice, at that time—appointed Yves de Montigny, his chief of staff, as a Federal Court judge. That is interesting.

[English]

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if Canadians had any doubts about how far the government will go to cater to its ultra-conservative base, they now have proof.

Canada's system for selecting judges worked. The Prime Minister is pretending to fix something that everybody knows is not broken. The only reason he is stacking the committees is to select judges who will cater to his neo-conservative agenda.

Will the Prime Minister show respect for our judicial system and stop his blatant attempts to politicize and control the judges?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government's objective is very clear. We want safer communities and streets for Canadian families. In terms of the judicial system and how our country works, Canadians are clear. They want a Parliament that passes laws and they want a judiciary that is independent, interprets those laws and applies the laws. Everything we are doing is designed to achieve that objective.

• (1420)

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians learned today that the Conservatives have broken an election promise. That was to make public appointments according to “merit based, widely publicized, fairly conducted processes”.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore has the floor to ask a question. We will want to hear his question.

Mr. Michael Ignatieff: Mr. Speaker, given these promises, how can the minister justify subverting the judicial appointment process and so clearly break an election promise?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the only people casting any aspersions on the judicial system and the appointment process are members of the Liberal Party of Canada.

In fact, the process that we have set in place was invented by a Conservative government in 1988. We have complete confidence in the individuals who are serving pro bono. That means they do not get paid for it; they do it because of their respect for the judicial system in this country. It is a system that works well and the Liberal Party should not be casting aspersions on it.

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is not this side of the House but that side of the House that is casting aspersions on the process.

[Translation]

Today, we learned that this Conservative government sabotaged the system by appointing partisan members to these committees.

How can the minister justify such political interference in our judicial system?

[English]

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can assure you that the individuals who have been appointed to this process are people who have the best interests of the judicial system at heart.

To be fair to the hon. member, it was brought to my attention about a week ago that in Alberta one of the individuals who was appointed was a supporter of the Conservative Party. I said, show me somebody in Alberta who did not support the Conservative Party, let us face it.

[Translation]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today we learned that, of the 33 members of the judicial advisory committees appointed by the current government, at least 16 are affiliated to some degree with the Conservative Party. Oddly enough, this party constantly criticized the Liberal government for its many partisan appointments. The Prime Minister even proceeded with the adoption of the Accountability Act in order to, and I quote, “change forever the way business is done in Ottawa”.

After conducting his election campaign on a platform of accountability and integrity, has the Prime Minister not fallen into the same trap as his predecessors?

[English]

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government is committed to appointing the finest judges in terms of merit and legal excellence. Part of doing that is having a judicial advisory committee that is composed of quality people, all of whom I might add, are serving at no cost to the taxpayers, as volunteers.

[Translation]

They are serving as volunteers for the benefit of all Canadians.

[English]

They are doing this with a mind to putting on the bench the very best people possible. When we look at the people that we have coming forward to serve in this role, one sees they are indeed people who all Canadians can be confident will do a fine job.

[Translation]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is clearly undertaking an ideological realignment by appointing people who think like he does to the judiciary advisory committee.

Oral Questions

Will the Prime Minister admit that the main objective of these partisan appointments is to ensure that the courts share his philosophy?

[English]

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think Canadians do not think it is unusual that we would want people who know something about the judicial system, such as police officers, to step forward to participate and provide advice on who should be in the courts. That is the kind of thing we believe in, just as this government believes in making our streets and communities safer for families and protecting them from the rising tide of crime. Some people may think that is rigid ideology. We think that is what Canadians want.

[Translation]

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga, BQ): Mr. Speaker, a most intriguing example of the Conservative government's partisan appointments to the judiciary advisory committee is that of Mark Bettens, a Nova Scotia firefighter.

Can the Minister of Justice tell us if Mr. Bettens is qualified to select judges because he is a firefighter or because he was a Conservative candidate who was twice defeated in Nova Scotia? How does the Conservative government justify his appointment?

• (1425)

[English]

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am not quite sure but it sounds like the hon. member was trying to make an attack on an individual who might be a firefighter.

I can tell him that firefighters are very involved with their communities and very involved with volunteering their time. That is what these committees are for. They are individuals who come together and in the best interests of their country and the judicial system make recommendations to the Government of Canada.

The constitutional authority for appointments rests with the Minister of Justice on recommendation to the Governor General. We will continue to make the high quality of appointments that we have had up to this point.

[Translation]

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we believe that judges should not choose firefighters and firefighters should not choose judges. That is how it should work.

Two weeks ago, the Minister of Industry called it an act of patronage to require Boeing to provide sufficient spinoffs to Quebec. I do not know what he would call the partisan appointments by his government.

Is it patronage or just chance that Ms. Johanne Desjardins, a graphic artist, was appointed by the government to recommend judges? Is it happenstance or because she was a staff member of a former Conservative minister?

[English]

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the members of that

committee come from a wide range. We have representatives from the Bar Association, the Office of the Attorney General, members of the judiciary and, yes, members from the general public, equal or spirited-minded volunteers, people who are prepared to spend their time and give their best advice.

I totally reject his comments with respect to firefighters. It is an insult to firefighters across the country.

* * *

CANADIAN FORCES

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice's comments just now were insulting and arrogant with regard to the whole issue of partisanship and judges. I wish he would take it more seriously.

[Translation]

On another matter, when we ask our troops to risk their lives on the front, their families expect a minimum of support if the ultimate sacrifice is made. The widows of Canadian soldiers killed in Afghanistan now have to fight the banks. Despite making \$19 billion in profits last year, the banks refuse to honour their mortgage insurance because their husbands were killed in combat. This is indecent and shameful.

What will the government do about this injustice?

[English]

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in terms of the insurance policies that are offered by the military, the military does have insurance plans that do not have a war or terrorism clause.

In terms of the banks, I think the member's concern has been taken up by the Minister of Finance who has written to the banks to ask them to explain this policy and perhaps exercise some deference in support of our troops who are doing their best and putting their lives on the line to defend Canadians and to defend freedom and democracy in Afghanistan.

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, writing letters to the banks does not seem to do very much good. What we need is a government that will stand behind these brave families in terms of what they are facing. They have a labyrinth right now of obstacles facing them when it comes to dealing with these mortgage payments and it seems to depend on how loud and clear they are able to have their voices heard. That should not be the case.

Can we not agree that these families should get our support unequivocally? Will the government not ensure that it will stand behind these families when they are trying to get their mortgages covered if someone in their family has been killed in combat?

Hon. Greg Thompson (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will let the House know that this year alone this government spent \$352 million more on veterans and their families than last year. We implemented a new veterans charter which commits us to \$250,000 for every widow, tax free, something the other government sat on but did not do. We are spending more on veterans and their families and the widows.

*Oral Questions***JUDICIAL APPOINTMENTS**

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, within months of taking office, the Conservatives began stacking the bench with their friends: the former president of their party in Quebec, the Conservative co-chair from New Brunswick, a Conservative fundraiser from Alberta, and on it goes. These appointments were made by the former justice minister until we caught him with his hand in the cookie jar.

Will the new, moderate justice minister do what his predecessor refused to do and stop appointing Conservative Party hacks to judicial positions?

• (1430)

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there may be some confusion in the hon. member's mind. I should point out to her that all the appointments that have been made by this government have been recommended by the judicial appointments commission that the Liberals set up. Every one of them were recommended by the members that they put on that board. What is their complaint?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government is allowing an increasing number of judges' positions to remain empty. Worse yet, while the Conservatives are going over their list of defeated candidates with a fine toothed comb, they are turning their noses up at qualified candidates. Apparently, it will be a Conservative or no one.

Will the minister put an end to favouritism and appoint qualified, independent members, who are respected by the Canadian legal community?

[*English*]

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as we have pointed out repeatedly, we are appointing the most qualified judges.

It is interesting that the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine would speak about the quality of the appointments being made by our government when her government, in which she was a minister, appointed somebody named Luciano Del Negro to the Immigration and Refugee Board. I believe he is the husband of the member of Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine.

Hon. Ken Dryden (York Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it has cut off funding to advocacy groups for women, child care and aboriginals so important public voices do not get heard the way other voices do, the shutdown of debate within the Conservative caucus, closing down access to the media and the absence of debate on Afghanistan. With the government there is one way, no discussion, no debate, it is right, everyone else is wrong and no one else can be trusted.

Now we have the judicial appointment process and committees hand-picked; its way or no way.

Will the Prime Minister ever understand that not everything is politics? When will he start acting like a Prime Minister, like a real leader to all Canadians, not just the 37% who voted for him?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government has opened up the process. I would ask colleagues to witness the appointment of a Supreme Court justice, Mr. Justice Rothstein. That was an excellent system that was put in place by this government.

Liberal members may be worried about the appointments that we have made to the bench but I believe they will stand up to scrutiny. I also believe that they should be the very first ones to accept them because it was their committee that recommended every one of them.

Hon. Ken Dryden (York Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, why is the government doing this? The public wants independent voices, voices beyond politics. The Prime Minister clearly does not trust independent voices and does not have the confidence that he can win the day if there are voices beyond his influence.

The justice system deserves more. The Canadian people deserve more.

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians want a judicial system, a court system where Parliament makes the laws and the courts interpret them and apply them.

In terms of patronage appointments, we have already heard about the former chief of staff to the former minister of justice, Yves de Montigny. He was appointed by the Liberals to the federal court. Apparently they seem to think that is fine.

We heard about the husband of the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine being appointed to the Immigration and Refugee Board. We also have the former husband of the member for Westmount—Ville-Marie, Jacques La Salle, who was appointed to a post on the federal Immigration and Refugee Board.

The only good people to appoint are not all Liberals. There are some other ones too.

* * *

[*Translation*]

LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR OF QUEBEC

Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the expenses of the Lieutenant Governor of Quebec, Lise Thibault, are quite surprising and should be looked at more closely.

How can the Minister of Canadian Heritage justify to the public that she is refusing to require an audit of the expenses of the Lieutenant Governor of Quebec? After all, we are talking about the taxpayer's money. Why this refusal?

• (1435)

[*English*]

Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as members know, the resources given to the lieutenant governors are so they can carry out their responsibilities. An allotment is given on an annual basis. I have asked my department to consult and review the reporting requirements and they will be reporting back to me.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]*

Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, before 2004, the lieutenant governor had to justify her expenses by submitting receipts. Since 2004, this is no longer the case.

How can the government claim to be the champion of accountability and refuse to conduct a full audit of the expenses of the lieutenant governor, thereby condoning the abuses that may have been committed?

[English]

Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said, as soon as this was brought to my attention I asked the department to look into it. It will be reporting back to me. The information we received indicates that the process set up does not ask for full accountability, which is why we will put in measures that ensure taxpayer dollars are being used responsibly and enable the lieutenant governors to fulfill their important responsibilities in every province.

* * *

*[Translation]***OFFICIAL LANGUAGES**

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last week, the minister responsible for official languages boasted about the plan put forward by her colleague, the defence minister, even though this plan will eliminate bilingualism for senior military officers.

How can the minister responsible for official languages, who is a francophone, be happy about a plan that sets bilingualism in the Canadian Forces back 40 years?

[English]

Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member's allegations are outrageous. In our plan, all senior officers, colonels and above, will be bilingual. That is in the plan. The member is asserting something that is not accurate.

[Translation]

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, officials at the Canadian Forces Language School at Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu are afraid that the school will suffer as a result of such an ill-advised decision, because less stringent bilingualism requirements for senior officers will inevitably translate into lower demand for language courses.

Do the minister and the Minister of National Defence realize that the school could be forced to close for good, in part because of the plan they are so proud of?

Is this another Collège militaire situation?

[English]

Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for years and years, the language commissioner has reported that the defence plan for bilingualism failed. Year after year it failed. Once we get to a situation like that, it is time for a change.

We have developed a new plan that will ensure that the military within the defence department will meet all the mandates of the Official Languages Act.

*[Translation]***CANADIAN HERITAGE**

Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Quebec's culture minister was in Ottawa today to discuss cultural diversity. Unfortunately, the Minister of Canadian Heritage does not recognize the cultural specificity of Quebec.

While the Government of Quebec gives supplementary funding to Quebec cinema, the Minister of Canadian Heritage prefers to spend Canadians' money on her limousine service.

Does the minister realize that she is the most disappointing and ineffective minister this country has ever known?

[English]

Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to report that Minister Beauchamp from Quebec and myself had a very productive meeting this morning. In fact, I am proud to say that the Declaration for Cultural Diversity has been ratified by over 45 countries. It will now go into the implementation stage.

Canada will be looking for a seat on the intergovernmental committee. We have indicated that we want to host the first meeting of the intergovernmental committee here in Ottawa and that we will support the resources needed for the important work of that committee.

[Translation]

Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is totally unacceptable. We are talking about money, not theory. The minister is sitting around doing absolutely nothing. She has already managed to derail the Canadian Television Fund, and now her next victim is Quebec cinema.

The role of the Minister of Canadian Heritage is to preserve Quebec cinema, not destroy it.

When will she finally loosen the purse strings of her department? There are words, but there needs to be action.

● (1440)

[English]

Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I also had an opportunity to speak with the Quebec minister regarding the film industry. She is very supportive. I commended her on the actions taken by the Quebec government. She is very supportive of the work that we will be doing in a collaborative method to ensure we have a strong film industry in every province, including Quebec.

* * *

AFGHANISTAN

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the one day photo op allowed by the international cooperation minister in Afghanistan cost Canadian taxpayers \$35,000. When there are serious concerns about this mission, one would think that the government would find a better use for the money.

Oral Questions

Why does the government spend money on photo ops and marketing ploys when money in Afghanistan is so desperately needed on the ground?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the money is on the ground. In fact, Afghanistan is the largest recipient of development aid from the government. It is entirely appropriate and, I think, almost advisable in the circumstances, that the minister investigates that.

In terms of the cost, it was roughly one-quarter of the amount that the previous prime minister spent on rental for automobiles on a two day visit to Washington.

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is a poor answer from the wrong minister.

Like the foreign affairs minister, this is a PR driven exercise. The minister never left the compound. The government is more concerned about diverting attention away from the fact that it is spending nine times more on a combat mission than it is on the development on the ground.

There is no accounting on whether this aid money is getting through or whether it is actually helping.

When will we see the efforts in Afghanistan significantly increased instead of seeing \$35,000 photo ops?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Josée Verner (Minister of International Cooperation and Minister for la Francophonie and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member should have questioned his own government when it committed just \$60 million to Afghanistan for this year, \$50 million for next year and \$40 million for the year after that.

Our government has increased the development budget to \$100 million a year until 2011. These are concrete actions to achieve our development goals in Afghanistan.

* * *

[*English*]

ANTI-TERRORISM ACT

Mr. Gord Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in October 2001 this House passed a law written by a former Liberal government, the Anti-terrorism Act. It contained two powers which the Liberal Party then argued were key to Canada's ability to combat terrorism.

Despite the fact that Liberal members of the committee studying terrorism voted to keep the powers, last Friday the Liberals flip-flopped and signalled their intent to let the powers expire.

My question is for the Minister of Justice. Are Canadians safe without these powers? How does he plan to protect citizens if the Liberals vote against their own bill?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think that is a very good question. The member points out that these provisions in the motion now before the House were put in by the former Liberal government and had the complete support of Anne McLellan, then

justice minister, and another Liberal justice minister, the member for Mount Royal. They were very articulate on why we must have these provisions.

I suggest to the House that the threat of terrorism in this world is not decreasing. It is in fact increasing. That is the consensus around the world. We need these provisions. I say to hon. members, let us have a look at their final reports, we are glad to have a look at them, but in the meantime let us not let these important tools expire. Canadians are counting on us.

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on the same point, the NDP has always been opposed to the use of the investigative hearings and preventative arrest sections of the Anti-terrorism Act. Similarly, the Bloc has now rejected them and has taken that position. Finally, the Liberals have come around to seeing the light and are saying that it is time to sunset these draconian provisions, that it is time to strike a blow for civil liberties and human rights in this country.

Given that the majority of the House is clearly opposed to the continued use of these sections, will the minister simply withdraw the motion, allow this to be sunsetted, and get Canada back online with civil liberties and human rights?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure who the hon. member thinks we should be getting in line with. Other countries, like-minded countries like ours, are bringing in amendments and legislation that help fight terrorism in their countries.

The threat is not decreasing. It in fact is increasing. The provisions of the bill that were left to us by the former Liberal government mean that we only have the option of putting a motion before the House. It is either up or down or letting it sunset. We are not prepared to do that. We agree with those Canadians who are very worried about terrorism in this world.

* * *

● (1445)

JUDICIAL APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to accountability I know how much the Conservatives like to say they are new, but with the recent crass political appointments to the judicial advisory committees, they are acting just like old-style Liberals. We have not seen this kind of judicial interference and patronage since Messrs. Trudeau and Turner in 1984.

Under the leadership of Ed Broadbent, the NDP brought forward an accountability plan that would establish criteria for appointments and have those appointments reviewed by a parliamentary committee. I am asking the Minister of Justice today, in the spirit of cooperation and accountability, if he will put the names of these and future appointments forward for review by the—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Oral Questions

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have a process that was put in place by a previous Conservative government and it has worked very well. I do not think the hon. member is suggesting a change in the Constitution that would allow the Minister of Justice, on recommendation to the Governor General, to appoint judges. It is a process that has worked well. I mentioned earlier the appointment of Mr. Justice Rothstein to the Supreme Court. I think these are steps forward.

I do have to ask the member about one matter. He talked about this being a new government. How long is the New Democratic Party going to keep calling itself new? It has been over 40 years now.

* * *

AFGHANISTAN

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week the Minister of National Defence refused to answer when he knew of allegations that detainees in Afghanistan had been abused. It took a public complaint to prompt an investigation.

I hold in my hands situation reports marked "secret" which clearly show that the minister and other high-ranking defence department officials know almost immediately the fate of detainees, including whether any need medical care. Why did the minister wait more than seven months to initiate an investigation when he could have ordered one long before Professor Attaran filed a public complaint?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there are three investigations going on right now by the national investigation service, a board of inquiry, and the Military Police Complaints Commission. When they get to the bottom of the issue, either there will be some abuse or there will not be abuse. They will decide it.

[Translation]

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the reaction of the Minister of National Defence is somewhat perplexing.

Not only did it require a public complaint by Professor Attaran to launch an inquiry, but it also seems that the minister should have been aware of these allegations from last April.

I have the documents showing that General Hillier sent reports directly to the minister concerning the transfer of Afghan detainees and their medical condition. Therefore, the minister should have the report on the situation of April 2006 in his possession.

If the Minister of National Defence was aware of this, why did he not launch an inquiry sooner?

[English]

Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will say again that there are three investigations going on. We are not going to interfere with those investigations. We will find out if there is anything at the bottom of this. If there is not, it will go away.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is turning his back on Kyoto and billions and billions

of dollars in economic opportunities in spite of the legally binding word of the people of Canada.

Last Thursday, shares of Climate Exchange PLC, the owner of emissions trading exchanges in Amsterdam and Chicago, climbed to a record high, but our new environment minister confirmed that Canada would not pursue international carbon trading. Is it the government's position that the Chicago Board of Trade is wrong when it comes to the future of international carbon trading?

Mr. Mark Warawa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as we have said, and as I have told the hon. member many times, we are open to domestic carbon trading, to looking at it, but let us look at what the media is saying about that plan.

Tom Oleson of *Winnipeg Free Press* says regarding Bill C-288, "The cynicism and hypocrisy of this is staggering...". He says the record of the Leader of the Opposition "as environment minister was abysmally bad, earning him a reputation as the Dr. Dolittle on climate change". He says, "They complacently presided over a massive increase in Canadian greenhouse emissions even as they preached the virtues of Kyoto". He asks, "How do they get away with it?"

They do not. We are taking action on the environment.

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): There they go again, Mr. Speaker, instead of demonstrating that they can actually absorb basic facts about this file. The Minister of the Environment just last week repeated his misleading rhetoric about hot air credits.

Foreign investment in Canada will be devastated if Canada locks itself out of international emissions trading projected to be worth \$60 billion U.S. annually under Kyoto. Canadians will be dependent on imported technology. Does the international trade minister, then, who once endorsed participating in carbon markets, agree with this new-found position of this new government?

● (1450)

Mr. Mark Warawa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I really get excited about sharing what this new government is doing on the environment. Today we announced \$350 million in the ecotrust announcement in Quebec. With \$230 million in clean technology for the ecoenergy technology initiative, \$300 million for smart energy for Canadians, for the retrofits, and \$1.5 million for renewable energy technologies, we are getting the job done.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

CANADIAN TELEVISION FUND

Mr. Maka Kotto (Saint-Lambert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the decision made by Shaw and Vidéotron to suspend their contributions to the Canadian Television Fund based on the current formula is creating a major problem for the television industry, and the production of many programs is being compromised.

Does the Minister of Canadian Heritage not realize that Shaw and Vidéotron's refusal to contribute to the Canadian Television Fund is seriously jeopardizing television production in Quebec and that it is her duty to intervene?

[English]

Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have said before, we understand the seriousness of the situation. We also understand that the fund is the responsibility of the government but the regulation is a CRTC regulation. The responsibility of enforcing that regulation lies with the CRTC.

We are working on our options. We will do our job. We know that the CRTC will do its job.

[Translation]

Mr. Maka Kotto (Saint-Lambert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister must intervene. She must assume her responsibilities and ensure that the conditions of Shaw and Vidéotron's licences are respected. No matter what she says, she can do this, she does have that power.

Also, until this dispute is resolved, I ask the minister why the government refuses to make an interest-free loan to the Canadian Television Fund for the sums unpaid by Shaw and Vidéotron, and then take measures to ensure that the licence conditions are respected? That is a simple solution and one that the minister can implement.

[English]

Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I again reiterate that we need to have an informed government. This informed government knows that the power lies with the CRTC, not the minister and not the government, in enforcing its regulations. It is very clearly laid out in the Broadcasting Act.

I know that the CRTC recognizes its responsibility just as we recognize our responsibility. This is a serious situation and we are going to be doing something about it.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Hon. Karen Redman (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week both the Minister of the Environment and his parliamentary secretary asserted that the former U.S. vice-president, Al Gore, supported the Conservative government's climate change policy. We now know that is not true. Today Mr. Gore issued a formal statement repudiating the government's abandonment of the Kyoto principles.

Since it is no longer possible for the minister to mischaracterize Mr. Gore's position, will he now take the former vice-president's advice and embrace the fight for Kyoto on the world stage?

Mr. Mark Warawa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I saw the movie by Mr. Gore. It is called *An Inconvenient Truth*. The inconvenient truth for the Liberal members is that they did absolutely nothing. In fact, it was their deputy leader who said, "I think our party got [us] into a mess on the environment". Absolutely, they did get us into a mess, they did not get it done, and that is a fair criticism.

We are getting it done even without their help. The former leader did not get it done. We are going to get it done even without his help.

[Translation]

Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this morning, as part of Canada's new ecoTrust program to bring about real reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and air pollutants, our Prime Minister made a major funding announcement: \$350 million for Quebec.

In contrast to the Liberals' hot air and inaction, not to mention the Bloc's powerlessness, can the Minister of Industry tell the House what our government is doing for Quebeckers on the crucial climate change file?

• (1455)

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, I would be pleased to tell the House about it. As you know, our government has a plan to fight climate change and yes, today we announced a major \$350 million investment to fight greenhouse gases and air pollution.

Unfortunately, the Bloc Québécois talks, criticizes and questions, but for years, they have been unable to get concrete results on any file affecting Quebeckers. The Leader of the Opposition, with his centralizing mindset, is incapable of building a good relationship with the Government of Quebec.

* * *

[English]

SHIPBUILDING

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government very quietly is negotiating trade deals with Korea and the EFTA countries of Europe. Unfortunately for the shipyard workers and their families in this country, it appears that shipbuilding is on the government's radar map in order to destroy it in this country. The government is negotiating it away with these current deals.

This is the same government that in the 1980s negotiated the free trade deal with the Americas that really hurt our shipbuilding industry. Now it is doing it again with our shipbuilding industry with Korea and EFTA. I would like assurances from the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade that the shipyard workers and their families will not be harmed by this trade deal in the future.

Oral Questions

Mr. Ted Menzies (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade and Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his ongoing support for the shipbuilding industry.

We in this new government share that concern. That is why we have had an ongoing dialogue with the shipbuilding industry to make sure that it is involved in the decision making, and not only the shipbuilding industry but other industries that tend to benefit from free trade agreements. That is why we get involved in them.

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): The reality is, Mr. Speaker, that Norway and Korea have subsidized their shipbuilding industry for years.

The government knows very well that the industry is asking for support, not rhetoric, from the government.

The defence minister was in Halifax on January 12 and stated to the Chamber of Commerce that shipbuilding was a very important strategic industry in our country.

I am asking the parliamentary secretary one more time. Will he assure us that the reduction of tariffs will not happen under this trade deal and that all shipyard workers and their families will be protected regardless of what is in that deal?

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member that the shipbuilding industry is an important industry for us on this side of the House. It is so important that we had consultation with the shipbuilding industry. With the defence minister, we will put together an action plan to ensure that all the ships purchased by the government will be built in Canada.

* * *

CANADIAN FORCES

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the widows of Canada's fallen soldiers are being shortchanged by the government. To add to their burden, these widows are finding their benefits do not include coverage for their mortgages.

These individuals all deserve the highest respect and care from their government and all Canadians.

When will they offer the widows and the families of our fallen soldiers automatic relief against future mortgage payments?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was shocked this morning to read the newspaper report, which I am sure the member opposite read, with respect to the apparent differential treatment of some widows in Canada. Their husbands and their spouses are Canadian heroes. They have lost their lives in the service of our country.

I made it clear to the banks today that I expect them to be generous in their treatment of all widows in our country, and I await their response. I will be pleased to report to the House with respect to their response as soon as it is received.

INTERNATIONAL AID

Mr. Gary Schellenberger (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, recently, there have been calls for the government to help the Sudanese population, which is displaced and living in extreme conditions.

Last week, the Minister of International Cooperation mentioned that the Government of Canada had spent \$39 million in humanitarian aid for the Sudanese.

Could the minister tell us if more money will be allocated to the organizations that are in the field in Sudan?

● (1500)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Josée Verner (Minister of International Cooperation and Minister for la Francophonie and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I am pleased to announce that I have approved a \$13 million contribution from our government to a project to integrate displaced persons in the transitional zones. This project will be carried out jointly by international organizations including UNICEF and Save the Children.

Our government is monitoring the situation closely and continually adapting to the needs of populations in humanitarian distress.

* * *

CONVENTION ON THE PROTECTION AND PROMOTION OF THE DIVERSITY OF CULTURAL EXPRESSIONS

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, adopted by UNESCO, became a reality on December 18, 2006. The convention will come into force on March 18, 2007, and the government has announced that it wants to be on the intergovernmental committee responsible for administering the convention.

Does the Minister of Canadian Heritage intend to actively promote the creation of a secretariat for this convention, and will she do everything in her power to make sure it is established in Quebec City?

[*English*]

Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I reported earlier, we had the fourth round table on cultural diversity. We have indicated that we will be participating in the meetings this June, in Paris, to set up the intergovernmental committee. Canada wants to be a member of that committee. We want to host the first international meeting of that committee. We will be contributing to the implementation and the measures taken by every country that is a signature.

MEMBER FOR KAMLOOPS—THOMPSON—CARIBOO

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for the second time in four weeks, the MP for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo told her local papers that she was a member of cabinet. This is somewhat confusing as parliamentary secretaries do not sit in cabinet. Ask any child studying Grade 8 social sciences.

Could the Prime Minister explain when his cabinet grew to include the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am unfamiliar with the reports of which the member speaks, but I would be happy to look into it.

However, we are very proud of the cabinet and the group of parliamentary secretaries, who are doing first rate work for all Canadians, including the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS AND NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Colin Mayes (Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, entitled “No Higher Priority: Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education in Canada”.

In accordance with Standing Order 109, the committee requests a government response to this report within 120 days.

* * *

● (1505)

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Mario Silva (Davenport, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-400, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (firefighters).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased and honoured to rise today in the House to present a bill entitled an act to amend the Criminal Code, firefighters. The bill would make it an offence punishable by prison terms for those who assaulted or endangered the life of a firefighter while in the conduct of duty.

Everyday across the country firefighters put their lives on the line to protect their fellow citizens, often putting their own lives at great peril. The tragic events that took place recently in Winnipeg clearly demonstrate the sad reality. As citizens, we owe them a great deal of respect, dignity and honour for the work that they do on our behalf.

It is absolutely essential that firefighters know that we know the risks they take everyday on our behalf. It is also important they know that anyone who deliberately adds to the dangers firefighters face each day by virtue of criminal behaviour will be fully held to account.

Routine Proceedings

The bill would amend the Criminal Code to this effect. If anyone chooses to commit a crime against a firefighter while they are in the course of their duty, they will face harsh penalties under the bill.

I invite my colleagues in the House to support the bill and, in so doing, to honour the hard work and dedication demonstrated each day by firefighters across this country.

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

* * *

EXCISE TAX

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-401, An Act to amend the Excise Tax Act (no goods and services tax on reading materials).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I thank many constituents in my riding who have asked us to introduce this legislation. We did in last Parliament and now we are reintroducing it.

We do not believe, especially when there are such great concerns about adult literacy and people who are functionally illiterate, that we charge a tax on all reading materials. The NDP firmly believes that reading is an important element of self-gratification and it helps our economy. We should not be taxing reading materials that help people learn and experience the joy of reading.

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

The Speaker: Does the hon. member wish to proceed with his next bill respecting tartan day at this time, or would he rather wait until he has his kilt on?

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

* * *

TARTAN DAY ACT

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-402, An Act respecting a Tartan Day.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I probably should have allowed my colleague, the hon. member for Windsor—Tecumseh, to present this. It is ironic that a Dutchman would introduce a bill asking that April 6 be noticed as tartan day.

I thank Mrs. Jean Watson of lower Sackville, Nova Scotia for this great idea. The Scottish add great history to our country. Who cannot help celebrate January without a great Robbie Burns night?

We think it would be a great idea for the federal government and all parliamentarians recognize April 6 in Canada as tartan day in Canada.

Routine Proceedings

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

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Hon. Jay Hill (Secretary of State and Chief Government Whip, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among all parties and I think you would find there is unanimous consent for the following motion:

That, in relation to its study of Bill C-18, An Act to amend certain Acts in relation to DNA identification, 12 members of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights be authorized to travel to the RCMP DNA Centre, Alta Vista Drive, Ottawa, on Wednesday, February 14, and that the necessary staff do accompany the Committee.

The Speaker: 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)

● (1510)

STATUS OF WOMEN

Mrs. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I move that the third report of the Standing Committee on Status of Women, presented to the House on Friday, May 19, 2006, be concurred in.

It is my pleasure this afternoon to ask my hon. colleagues in the House to concur in the third report of the Standing Committee on Status of Women. This report is essentially comprised of the motion adopted on May 19, 2006 by a majority of the committee members. It reads:

In accordance with Standing Order 109, the Committee requests that the Government table a comprehensive response to the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1: The Committee reiterates the recommendation made in its 10 February 2005 report, calling on the federal government to increase funding to the Women's Program at Status of Women Canada by at least 25% for investments in women's groups and equality seeking organizations.

Recommendation 2: That Status of Women Canada immediately take advantage of the ongoing review of the Women's Program to revise the funding to organizations by introducing a mix of core funding and project funding.

Recommendation 3: That the Government of Canada, through its central agencies, ensure that all new and renewed funding programs incorporate the commitments undertaken by the Government of Canada in the Code of Good Practice on Funding—

Recommendation 4: That Status of Women Canada take advantage of the current evaluation of the Women's Program to implement new funding processes which could position Status of Women Canada as a leader in the application of the Code of Good Practice on Funding.

Recommendation 5: That Status of Women Canada immediately engage equality-seeking organizations in meaningful consultation to determine future directions for the Women's Program.

Recommendation 6: That Status of Women Canada develop fair and consistent practices which recognize the indirect costs to be covered by Women's Program funding—

Recommendation 7: That Status of Women Canada work with other federal government departments to raise awareness about the importance of funding gender projects relevant to the funding mandates of those departments.

Recommendation 8: That Status of Women Canada explore eligibility criteria for Women's Program funding through meaningful consultation with equality-seeking organizations.

Recommendation 9: That Status of Women Canada act now to enter into funding agreements for a minimum period of three years.

Finally, recommendation 10: That the Standing Committee on the Status of Women be granted intervenor status in the ongoing review of the Women's Program to ensure that the comments contained in this report are appropriately reflected in the review process.

The government's response to the committee's recommendations was inadequate to say the least. The response did not address a single recommendation of the committee and in point of fact, completely dismissed all 10 recommendations.

The government's September 18 response indicated that the current funding and mandate were sufficient. The Conservative government then cut the funding and changed the mandate. We are now taking steps backward instead of forward. By shutting offices, changing the mandate and cutting 50% of the operating budget, the minister is not promoting women's rights, but abandoning them.

It is an embarrassment that in 25 years we have not come close to meeting our CEDAW obligations. This past December marked the 25th year since Canada ratified the convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, CEDAW. Canada has not met its obligations, and in particular, recommendations regarding violence against women, poverty, aboriginal women and social housing have been sorely neglected.

The women in Canada deserve better. The women in Canada deserve equality because we still face gender based violence and poverty. Canadian women have trouble finding safe, affordable housing and are concentrated in low wage and part time jobs.

Mr. Speaker, the statistic of 71¢ should sound familiar to you. The reason? Because women in Canada, after all these years, still make only 71¢ for every dollar men make. Women are only 20.8% of elected officials, and one in five Canadian women live in poverty.

It is not just this Conservative government, though it must face its record. In the last 13 years, the Liberals too have failed to comply with CEDAW and invest in Status of Women so that equality rights could be achieved in Canada, and the Conservative record is indeed dismal. Now the government has removed equality from the mandate and eliminated any research and advocacy funding. This is an assault on the women's movement in Canada and will set equality rights back more than a generation. One needs to wonder if that is indeed the intent.

While claiming that the government wants to make things more accessible, the minister closed 12 of 16 Status of Women offices. This leaves only four offices to address the needs of the entire country.

● (1515)

The changes to the mandate will allow funding only on a project by project basis. Core funding will not be addressed and core funding is essential. With core funding women's organizations can plan and sustain their infrastructure and do the important work they are doing in the context of these essential projects.

Funding only projects leaves many organizations scrambling between projects to make ends meet. It limits the ability to hire permanent staff and creates a high level of instability. Valuable time and energy is wasted on applications and not helping women who need it.

The current setup forces women's organizations to become experts on policy and navigating through red tape. This is not the best use of their time. One woman, Doreen Parsons from the Women's Economic Equality Society in Nova Scotia told the committee:

Yes, I think it's a values issue. As governments move to a business model, where we hear of competition and innovation and developing partnerships and diversification and, obviously, an economic bottom line, this requires incredible skill and time and effort to work within this framework.

Yet that's the part that isn't funded, that time to work within the framework to build the partners and diversify. The issues are quite significant for those of us who survive on project-based funding.

From a staffing or human resource perspective, as you mentioned, you train staff. You hire women who are very skilled and train them, and not only that, they love their jobs and do wonderful work. Then they're terrified that before the 12-month period is over, they're going to be laid off, and there's no bridging money so they can be hired again if you happen to get funding.

You're writing proposals on weekends and in the evening because you too are working on project-based funding, and it's very cyclical. The demands it places on the existing staff are significant, and trying to manage and administer an organization without those supports is significant. For an organization to be able to plan is close to impossible over the long term because you go into cycles of having to develop significant proposals.

I think it's important to note that the skill that is now required to actually develop a proposal is extreme, so to retain the qualified people needed to do that kind of work is also very significant.

You have cycles within non-profits now. You have one year when you're writing so many proposals and building the proposals, and then the next year, when they're funded, your staffing levels go up, and then they go down again. It's quite a difficult situation, then, to be able to deliver any kind of sustainable program.

Women's equality still remains elusive for all too many women. Women's inequality remains deeply entrenched and systemic.

As numerous studies and reports have demonstrated, sexual discrimination is still a part of women's realities at work, in the family, in political life, and in our social and cultural institutions. Women from historically disadvantaged groups suffer even deeper and more serious forms of inequality.

A recent Statistics Canada report entitled "Equality for Women: Beyond the Illusion", released in July 2006, reiterates this reality. It says on page 17:

—lead many people to think that we have truly achieved equality for women in Canada. Much as we would like it to be so, it is simply not the case.

Cutting Status of Women, changing the mandate, eliminating core funding and closing offices will hinder, not enable, women's equality. We need more funding, not less.

With funding, equality seeking organizations were able in the past to introduce maternity benefits into the Unemployment Insurance Act in the 1970s; amend federal and provincial family law legislation to ensure more economic justice for wives, to protect their access to the matrimonial home, to improve the law of custody and access, and introduce child support guidelines; amend Criminal Code provisions to abolish the immunity of husbands for raping their wives; adopt prosecutorial policies to criminalize wife assault; amend the Indian Act to eliminate the discriminatory exclusion of Indian status for aboriginal women who married non-Indian men; and amend federal

Routine Proceedings

and provincial human rights statutes to prohibit sexual harassment and discrimination based on pregnancy and sexual orientation, for example, the protection of therapeutic and confidential files of sexual assault survivors in the context of criminal proceedings.

● (1520)

The committee recommends the inclusion in the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act with a requirement that the minister conduct an analysis of the impact of the act on women and that he or she report to Parliament annually on this gender based analysis.

In addition to providing advice to government and government agencies, groups such as NAWL, LEAF and FAFIA have funded non-SWC women's groups with their research, legal and economic expertise. This legal expertise was much needed in the recent fight to remove religious arbitration in family law matters from the Ontario arbitration act.

As I have stated before, the struggle for full equality is not over yet. In January 2003 the UN expert committee reviewing Canada's fulfillment of its equality commitments to women noted that significant improvements needed to be made.

Recommendation 6 from the committee on the elimination of discrimination against women recommended that, first, Canada establish and/or strengthen effective national machinery, institutions and procedures at a high level of government and with adequate resources, commitment and authority to advise on the impact on women of all government policies, to monitor the situation of women comprehensively, and to help formulate new policies and effectively carry out strategies and measures to eliminate discrimination.

Second, the committee recommended that the government take appropriate steps to ensure the dissemination of the convention, the reports of the state parties under article 18 and the reports of the committee in the language of the states concerned.

Third, the committee recommended that Canada seek the assistance of the secretary general and department of public information in providing translations of the convention and the reports of the committee.

Fourth, it recommended that the government include in its initial and periodic reports the action taken in respect of this recommendation.

Among other things, the UN also recommended that Canada must find ways for ensuring that sufficient legal aid is available to women under all jurisdictions when seeking redress in issues of civil and family law and in those relating to poverty issues.

Routine Proceedings

The UN recommended that Canada accelerate its efforts to eliminate all forms of discrimination against aboriginal women both in society at large and in their communities, particularly with respect to the remaining discriminatory legal provisions and the equal enjoyment of their human rights to education, employment and physical and psychological well-being. It also recommended that aboriginal women receive sufficient funding in order to be able to participate in the necessary governance processes that address issues which impede their legal and substantive equality.

It recommended that Canada eliminate remaining provisions and practices which still discriminate against immigrant women and address provisions and practices which may still contribute to devaluing women's educational skills and previous economic contributions to their families' well-being.

It recommended that Canada monitor closely the situation of women's non-standard jobs and to introduce employment related measures which will bring more women into standard employment arrangements with adequate social benefits. It also urged Canada to accelerate its implementation efforts as regards equal pay for work of equal value at the federal level.

It recommended a search for innovative ways to strengthen the currently existing consultative federal-provincial-territorial process for human rights as well as other mechanisms of partnership in order to ensure that coherent and consistent measures in line with the convention are achieved.

It recommended that the government expand affordable child care facilities under all governments and that it report, with nationwide figures, on demand, availability and affordability of child care in its next report.

The committee recommended that Canada reconsider those changes in the fiscal arrangements between the federal government and the provincial and territorial governments, so that national standards of a sufficient level are re-established and women will no longer be negatively affected in a disproportionate way in different parts of the country.

It recommended that Canada ensure that women's non-governmental organizations representing different groups of women under all governments, and other relevant non-governmental organizations, be involved in a national discussion in Canada and the dissemination of the next report.

With proper funding we can do this and so much more. We must end the Conservative government's attack on the women of this country.

In 1991 a subcommittee of the standing committee on health, welfare, social affairs and seniors wrote a report entitled, "The War against Women". In that report the committee demanded that violence against women be put on the public agenda because this country was reeling over the senseless murder of 14 women engineering students at École Polytechnique in Montreal. Canadians demanded to know how and why Canadian women were still vulnerable to such attacks.

●(1525)

The final recommendation of that report was that the federal government take a leadership role and work with women's groups across the country to address violence and inequality.

It is time for leadership, not backpedalling. We must move forward for the sake of those 14 women, for the sake of our mothers, our daughters, ourselves. It is that simple. It is that important.

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise in the House to debate the third report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

The report, "Funding Through the Women's Program: Women's Groups Speak Out" calls on the Government of Canada to consider 10 recommendations. The 10 recommendations ask the government to consider a number of central issues concerning the modernization of the women's program. I am pleased to report that Canada's new government has reviewed all 10 of the recommendations and has addressed a number of concerns. I must say we have appreciated this dialogue today in the House.

Canada's new government is committed to supporting the full participation of all Canadian women in the economic, social and cultural life of Canada. We believe that women are strong achievers, leaders in every sector of our society, providers for our families and role models. I am sure you share that belief too, Mr. Speaker.

In fact, members of the opposition have worked on a campaign of fear and deception for the last six months. That is a sad commentary for parliamentarians. While the word "equality" was removed from the mandate of the women's program, what they will not talk about is the inclusion of section 15 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which stipulates:

Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.

In fact, I would argue that the inclusion of section 15 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms actually strengthens the mandate of the women's program. It recognizes the equality of all people and goes straight to the heart of the matter.

Recommendation 5 of the report calls on the minister to:

—engage equality seeking organizations in meaningful consultation to determine future directions for the Women's Program.

As members opposite will know, the minister has taken her responsibility seriously and has met with a number of women's organizations and individuals. She has held a number of round tables focusing on what actions can be taken by all levels of government, private sector and NGOs to make a real difference in Canadian women's lives.

The crux of this report focuses on the women's program and what can be done to modernize the program so that it can be effective and so that it follows the code of good practice on funding. Under the new terms and conditions, we will focus on supporting projects that will directly assist women in their communities. We will focus our efforts and support on addressing the issues of the economic stability of women, particularly senior women and violence against women. We will be working with other departments across the government to support women in their various roles as mothers, employees, entrepreneurs, community builders, and taxpayers.

It was Albert Einstein who was attributed with the quintessential definition of insanity: doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results. Hundreds of advocacy and research groups have expressed discouragement with the women's program's terms and conditions. It is our hope they will reconsider their position and apply for project funding to help women in their communities.

It is not a matter of doing the same thing over and over again until results are produced. It is a matter of doing the same thing over and over again in such a way that it is effective and expecting different results and measuring those results to see that it impacts on women.

In fact, it is our hope that organizations will look for project funding to train women to enter the workforce, apply for small business loans, create peer mentoring groups and offer support to victims of abuse, among other things.

The job has not been completed when it comes to women in society, but simply continuing to fund lobbyists has not been working and it is time we add a new approach and take action. We know that organizations all across Canada have been doing their part to directly support women facing many challenges. We will now be able to more effectively partner with them in their work.

● (1530)

The opposition has also falsely accused this government of stopping women's organizations from advocating for women's rights. Again, this is simply not true. Canada's new government believes in the right of all individuals to advocate, and women's groups are free to do so.

We know that direct assistance for women delivered more locally will have the greatest impact. Barriers such as the need for training or updating their skills, the need for personal advice on preparing job applications and for interviews, the need for mentorship in their local communities, or the need for immigrant women to access services, whether the services are being provided by non-profit organizations or different levels of government: these are real needs faced by women in communities all across this country. Our support will make a real difference in the lives of Canadian women. This government wants to tackle the real barriers that exist.

After over 30 years of existence, Status of Women Canada must deliver real, measurable results directly affecting women and their families. The opposition has also been trying to mislead Canadian women when it comes to the question of funding. What it fails to mention is the fact that no money, and I repeat no money, has been removed from the women's program. The women's program's grants and contributions will have the same annual budget of \$10.8 million.

Routine Proceedings

I repeat, the savings will not affect the \$10.8 million available to support women.

In addition, we have committed to the Sisters in Spirit initiative. Our government will continue to provide \$1 million a year to 2010-11.

As we all know, traditionally, aboriginal women have played a key role in their communities. But in October 2005, Canada was cited by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights as failing to adequately address the high rate of violence against aboriginal women. These women and their children deserve safe communities.

The minister has met with first nations, Métis and Inuit women's organizations and their message was clear. They are looking for a government that will deliver change, that will act and make a meaningful difference in their lives. We must continue to support those in the aboriginal community, like Sisters in Spirit, who are taking action.

Canada was also cited in the same 2005 report as failing to address the issue of matrimonial property rights for aboriginal women. As a member of the new Conservative government, I am proud that the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development has announced nationwide consultations on the matrimonial property rights issue. These consultations with provincial and territorial governments, first nations and aboriginal organizations are important first steps toward finding solutions to protect the rights and to ensure the well-being of women, children and families living on reserve.

I would also like to point out that this government has taken measures to strengthen Canada's response to the unique needs of the victims of human trafficking, victims who are often women and children.

This government is firmly committed to ensuring the rights of individuals and our cost efficiency savings coupled with the new terms and conditions of the women's program will do just that.

Recommendation 7 calls on Status of Women Canada to work with other federal government departments to raise awareness about gender based equality. I am also pleased to let the House know that a working group has been set up to address gender issues in all federal departments. Canada's new government believes in equality. All of our departments will work to bring forward issues of importance to women, not just one department, but all departments, in our future work in supporting the full participation of all Canadian women in the economic, social and cultural life of Canada.

The new Conservative government's focus will remain on support going directly to Canadian women, support that delivers real results. We will continue strengthening accountability and supporting projects that lead to the direct participation of women.

In one short year this government has taken real action and we will continue to do so on behalf of all Canadians. I am so proud of the development that has happened within the status of women.

Routine Proceedings

Finally, this year, after trying to get the topic of human trafficking on the status of women agenda, we were able to bring in witnesses from all over Canada. They talked about how young women and young children were put at risk and were not able to fend for themselves in the human trafficking network all across the country. In the status of women we continue to address that issue.

● (1535)

With this new approach in the status of women we have listened to what Canadian women have to say. We have heard their cries about the studies and studies that have occurred in status of women and no action has been taken.

Under this new approach, this government and the minister have identified \$5 million in administrative savings. An independent evaluation of the women's program previously discovered that it had taken 31¢ in administration overhead to deliver one program dollar to women. This was unfair to the women who require the services and to the Canadian taxpayers as well. That is why our government is reducing overhead, closing some offices and rededicating the savings to better assist Canadian women. All of the savings are being set aside for reinvestment in delivering support directly to Canadian women.

The \$10.8 million annual budget previously allotted to the women's program is entirely maintained. This will result in more money to support women in their communities. For the first time status of women will increase accessibility by making funding applications available on line to organizations that undertake projects to benefit women directly, as well as doing it other ways.

This modernization will assist the government in meeting the twin goals of better managing its expenditures while delivering more services in a modern and effective way. The beneficiaries of this change will be Canadian women as they will be able to meet challenges and more fully participate in the social and economic life in Canada.

At committee there were women from organizations who said that for the first time they felt that their world had opened up. They did not really know much about status of women, except they did know that they could not actually apply for funds. Many of those women stood up and said that they were really happy that their organizations could now make those applications, could go forward and get some funding for what they need to do. Many people came forward to say that. As we go forward this year, I know that all members want to see programs put in place all across our country where women will be directly impacted.

For instance, we heard about a very interesting project, the first one to be approved under the new terms and conditions, the Prince George New Hope Society. This is a project to help sex workers and sexually exploited young women, particularly young aboriginal women in Prince George and northern British Columbia. It is very excited about having the funding to support these women so they can renew and rebuild their lives. The Prince George New Hope Society project works with community organizations, law enforcement and the RCMP. One evening a week people from the New Hope Society are on the streets describing what the organization offers.

This is an organization that is on the street working one to one with women. Young women who choose not to live on the streets can get a workshop project going.

It also has a project to sensitize law enforcement officers. This is very important because RCMP officers and other police officers who work closely on the street with organized crime, the drug trade and prostitution often get a hardened outlook. This wonderful organization, the Prince George New Hope Society, has put together a project to help sensitize RCMP and other law officers and help them understand what happens to these women and what the women have gone through and how to approach them and question them.

● (1540)

We are very proud of the project. It manages information about the judicial system for these women. Within this small community where these people knew they could apply for the funding and knew they could take that money and apply it on the ground, right in their community, they are appreciative of the fact that they are able to see some real results on the street with this kind of thing.

The funds and the reporting requirements will be made accountable to ensure all the money is used for what it was intended. We have been reassured that the accountability factor will be in this project.

It is very gratifying when we hear success stories like this. I know the Prince George New Hope Society will come back with many wonderful stories of success because they have done all the groundwork right.

Mrs. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am afraid that Canada's new government is a little shopworn.

The member talked about fear and deception. I am afraid the fear is coming from the hundreds of women's organizations that have been silenced by the government and its deception when it speaks about equality.

I have two questions for the member. First, how on earth does cutting \$5 million from Status of Women Canada, closing 12 offices and laying off 63 experienced and dedicated staff help women across the country to access the expertise they need to do the work that government in fact needs them to do? No government can do this alone.

Second, I asked the minister at committee how on earth the government arrived at the 31¢ in overhead. The minister was not able to answer my question. Perhaps my colleague from Kildonan—St. Paul could.

Mrs. Joy Smith: Mr. Speaker, as I listened to the presentations today I would like to know why members of our status of women committee object to \$5 million being taken away from administrative things so it can be put into women's programs? Why would they object to something like that?

I believe the minister answered the question on how we arrived at 31¢ on the dollar. I believe that an agency outside of government assessed the whole situation and came up with the fact that 31¢ out of a dollar was being used for women's programs. The minister said that was not enough.

Routine Proceedings

We want good use of taxpayer money. We want to ensure that taxpayer money goes toward what it was intended, which is programs for women all across Canada.

Mr. Bruce Stanton (Simcoe North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know the member, beyond her duties and hearing testimony at the Standing Committee for the Status of Women, had the opportunity not too long ago to actually go out and meet representatives of women's groups in different parts of Ontario.

I wonder if she could shed some light on those experiences and how they relate to the real reaction that she is seeing by women's groups in the province of Ontario, in particular.

• (1545)

Mrs. Joy Smith: Mr. Speaker, it was a very exciting tour and I found out two things.

First, it was interesting that a lot of these women's groups had misinformation. They did not know that they could actually apply for the money and they did not know that they could do research and advocacy within the programs if it fit the mandate as they applied. They realized that nothing had been shut down and they were very responsive to that. They got a lot of information and the response was quite positive.

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend, the hon. member for Kildonan—St. Paul, for the work she does on Status of Women.

I heard phrases in her speech today, phrases like investing in projects, reworking programs, measuring results to see how programs are working, peer mentoring and using partnerships to ensure programs are hitting the road and doing what they are supposed to do, modifying and adjusting spending, not cutting it, and reinvesting, but I also heard talk about accountability in spending.

Since I have only heard those terms and I continue to hear other more negative things said by other members of her committee about what has been done under Status of Women, I wonder if she would like to talk to us about what it means for projects and programs out there rather than the negatives that are out there.

Mrs. Joy Smith: Mr. Speaker, what women's groups all across our nation are finding out is that they can apply. The Status of Women is not just a name or a lobby group. A lot of women know they sometimes need lobbying and research conducted and they have been reassured that as long as it is a program within that project that deals directly with women on the ground, those two components can be incorporated if needed.

However, the result is that we want accountability. We want to know that every dollar is used to help women find jobs, to educate women, to promote women and to make them a part of Canadian society in every way. Under the constitution, we are created equal. We need to put down the barriers so all the opportunities for all these other things are there.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I and many people in my riding are troubled by these targeted cuts to Status of Women. As was said earlier, \$5 million, 12 offices and 63 staff people were cut by the government. Frankly, in a caucus that

has only 11% women, the government has lost the support of the majority of women in this country.

The money has been cut. She says that it is being reinvested but it has not been reinvested. When will the government actually put this money into equality seeking organizations that can advocate on behalf of women to do the job and work toward women's equality which is so desperately needed across Canada?

Mrs. Joy Smith: Mr. Speaker, there have been no cuts. It has been modernized. It has been invested. Instead of spending years and years with piles and piles of studies, we know what the problem is. This new government wants to take action and improve women's lives.

Another thing that is new is that it is not just the Status of Women. It is the collaboration of all ministries. The Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, for instance, has taken a gigantic step in aboriginal matrimonial rights. There are many areas in all ministries, which I do not have time to name, but the fact is there are no cuts. The \$5 million will be used directly for women.

I hear that people in the member's riding are upset. Perhaps she would invite me to her riding because I would give them the real story and the factual information. The only people who are upset are the ones who have not been given the truthful facts about the whole situation. The truthful fact is that we want to work with all members in the House to improve the lives of women. We want to work with all members in the House to stop human trafficking. We want to be very effective on the Status of Women.

• (1550)

Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have heard much about the facts. What is quite clear is that we need to have the facts.

The minister came before the committee and made it quite clear that she was reducing the administrative dollars. Now we are hearing that the program dollars are being reinvested.

When will all members get real information about what is happening with the funding for the Status of Women?

Mrs. Joy Smith: Mr. Speaker, if the member does not have the facts, I am pleased to say that today I can tell her that \$5 million will go directly into women's programs.

Hon. Maria Minna (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to concur with the third report of the standing committee today.

I want to read some of the recommendations. It is very important to understand what this report is saying so we can discuss a bit more what the speaker before me was saying and what the government is actually doing.

The first recommendation is that the government:

—increase funding to the Women's Program at Status of Women Canada by at least 25% for investments in women's groups and equality seeking organizations.

Routine Proceedings

Keep in mind that the standing committee did not just wake up one morning and say that it would make some recommendations to the government. The standing committee held hearings and met with hundreds of organizations across the country, as it has done for some time, and it continues to do. As the critic for Status of Women Canada for the Liberal Party, as well as a member of the standing committee, the work the committee does on an ongoing basis is very valuable.

Another recommendation is that the government:

—revise the funding to organizations by introducing a mix of core funding and project funding.

Right now there is only project funding and there is no stability for women's organizations when it comes to providing services.

Another recommendations says:

That the Status of Women Canada immediately engage equality seeking organizations in meaningful consultation to determine future directions for the Women's Program.

Note that it talks about equality seeking organizations, which have been pretty much erased from the face of the program as a result of the new criteria. Never mind consulting with them, they are no longer going to be allowed to be part of the program. The recommendation talks very directly about equality seeking organizations.

The next recommendation is:

That Status of Women Canada develop fair and consistent practices which recognize the indirect costs to be covered by Women's Program funding, and that these practices be developed in collaboration with equality seeking organizations.

Again, equality seeking organizations are a key part of these recommendations and of this report. They have been the backbone for decades, fighting for women's equality in our country. They have done the research, the advocacy, the lobbying, the fighting and the sloggng for anything that women have today.

Everything that has been attained today had to be fought for step by step by women across the country, including the equality provisions of which the government is so proud. The minister so proudly said, when she appeared at committee, that women in the country already had equality because it said so in the charter. Yes it does say that, and that is because women marched on Ottawa when they were left out of the charter. When the Constitution was initially presented, women were nowhere to be found. It was as a result of women complaining, fighting back and demonstrating that they were put in the charter in the first place.

The fact that the charter or any other document says that women are equal does not mean it happens. Government and institutional policy and all other kinds of legislation have not changed by virtue of that. They had to be fought and lobbied for every step of the way by women in the country and by those organizations, those equality organizations, those horrible organizations that the government sees necessary to somehow eliminate now because they are being far too loud and too visible and they should not be funded.

The minister said, when she appeared at committee, that women were equal already. If they wanted to fight for equality or advocate further, the advocacy did not have to stop. They could continue to do

that, but they should not be funded by the Government of Canada. Why should they be funded by taxpayers?

Here is a news flash. They are citizens of the country. They should have access to their taxpayer dollars to fight for their rights and for the rights of their sisters and other citizens.

The next recommendations is very interesting because the report is all about this:

That Status of Women Canada explore eligibility criteria for Women's Program funding through meaningful consultation with equality seeking organizations.

There is that awful word again, equality seeking organizations.

● (1555)

Another recommendation is:

That Status of Women Canada act now to enter into funding agreements for a minimum period of three years.

The report talks about equality seeking organizations and increasing funding because it was not sufficient, and I concur with that. It talks about core funding so there is some stability in the work that organizations do and can continue to do. It also talks about consistent funding for three years.

What has the government done? First, it cut \$5 million. It says that it has been reintegrated. However, not only has it cut 40%, but it has shut down 12 offices so accessibility is no longer very good across the country. People who have been let go in those offices were there to work with women's organizations to assist in developing programs on the ground in the regions of the country. Offices are being closed in Yellowknife and the Yukon. Tell me why that needs to be done.

The government not only cut the program, but it changed the very nature of it. Equality provisions of the program are gone. Why? Because as I said before, the minister says that we have equality. Therefore, why do we need to fight for it any further?

Then it eliminated other things. Therefore, equality seeking organizations can no longer get funded. Organizations looking for money for advocacy at the federal, provincial or municipal levels, cannot receive funding. It says that very clearly in the new criteria. The valuable research in advocacy for women that has been done over the years will be gone.

The old criteria used to say that:

—to promote policies and programs...that take account of gender implications, the diversity of women's perspectives and enable women to take part in decision-making...

The decision making process means being partners, being part of this country's decision making whether it be social, political or whatever. The criteria went on to say:

—to facilitate the involvement of women's organizations in the public policy process;...to increase public understanding in order to encourage action on women's equality issues...to enhance the effectiveness of actions undertaken by women's organizations to improve the situation of women.

These are all gone.

Routine Proceedings

Areas of focus include women's economic status, which is very important, violence against women and girls and achieving social justice. What is left is economic status, violence against women and girls and social justice. Why do women not need social justice in the country? Why did we drop political and legal aspects? Why did we drop equality and organizations?

Basically what the government is saying is that it will address the issue of trafficking. It will deal with the police issue and the victim, but it will not change the conditions that cause the problem in the first place, like the economic situation of women in this country and in other parts of the world. It will not have to deal with the causes. It will just have to deal with the results and the subsequent conditions that women live in these days. It is absolutely unacceptable. The government is saying that it will provide shelters for women, but it will not address the cause of violence against women or to reduce it.

I go back to the comments of the hon. member with respect to how proud we are of the work the committee has done on trafficking against women. It is tremendous work and the committee will be reporting. The economic underlying disadvantages of women is what is at stake. It is women's economic insecurity that causes the problem. The largest number of poor in the country are women?

I want to read some data into the record because it is important to note. Women in Canada form more than half, 53.9%, of the low income population; 47.1% of single parent families are headed by women are poor; and 37% of women of colour are low income compared with 19% of all women.

● (1600)

The average annual income of aboriginal women is \$13,300 compared to \$18,200 for aboriginal men and \$19,350 for non-aboriginal women. Thirty-six years after royal commission recommendations for legislative change for equal pay for work of equal value, women still earn approximately 71¢ of what men earn for a full year of full time work, only 71¢, irrespective of the level of education. The latest report that came out from Statistics Canada reinforced that with respect to pay equity. Taking into consideration even university and masters and all levels of education, women are still earning 71¢ on the dollar. That affects their pensions, their economic security and everything else.

A report was commissioned by the former Liberal government, which the Standing Committee on the Status of Women has recommended that the government implement and bring in legislation on pay equity. The former Liberal government had committed to bringing in legislation in the fall of 2006. When the standing committee sent the report back to the current government, asking that it come forward with legislation on pay equity, the Conservative government said no to women. It said it would deal with the existing system, which is ineffective, has been around for 35 years, and is not working. That is why we need legislation.

Here we are talking about reinvesting in new women's organizations and the government is saying funding is terrific. The fact is the issue of pay equity for women has still not been resolved. Women's organizations advocating for this issue are going to be unable to do this work any more. They will be unable to continue with their research. Why not? The Conservative government tells us we are equal after all.

I want to speak on another area with respect to women's issues. I will read something else into the record with respect to work that I was involved in within the previous Liberal government.

In 2001 the Liberal government extended maternity parental benefits under the employment insurance program for one year. This was an enormously popular policy change with Canadian families. However, the program does not meet the needs of all families. According to NAWL, the National Association of Women and the Law, that pesky advocacy organization that tells us what we need to do:

One in every three mothers does not have access to the maternity and parental benefit program under Employment Insurance. For those that do have access, benefits are often inadequate.

In 2004-05, average weekly maternity benefits were \$312, and parental benefits averaged \$372 for a man and \$316 for a woman. The current program excludes the self-employed and the large number of parents (such as recent immigrants, new entrants to the labour force and many part-time workers) who do not meet EI's stringent work requirements.

With more and more mothers of school-aged children in the workforce, it is good public policy to support this valuable contribution to society by reducing the economic impact of having children. Statistics Canada reports that in 2004, 65 per cent of all women with children under the age of 3 were employed, more than double the figure of 1976 when just 28 per cent were employed....

The province of Quebec is a leader in meeting the needs of women and families. In January 2006, the Quebec Parental Insurance Plan...came into force, replacing the maternity parental benefits, and adoption benefits previously available to new Quebec parents under the federal employment insurance plan.

It has been a goal of the Liberal Women's Caucus to find a way to provide maternity and parental benefits to all families in Canada.

We are recommending that be extended to self-employed women and to women who work part time and are unable to reach the required 600 hours under EI. Six hundred hours are very hard to reach even in other regions. This means these women do not qualify for parental and maternity leave.

This is an area that many women in the House and across the country have been working on and lobbying for. NAWL has been pushing for this. We were at the point where not only the Liberal women's caucus but the former Liberal government had agreed to extend maternity leave and parental leave to self-employed workers. In fact, the task force was commissioned by the former Liberal prime minister to bring in a report.

● (1605)

This advocacy work has gone on for a long time and yet we have not accomplished it. It is another one of those pesky things about equality, as we can see, in that we just never get it done. But somehow we are equal, and again, we have issues here to address in the area of disadvantages, whereby one government policy in fact causes a disadvantage to women and needs to be addressed.

Routine Proceedings

EI, which is another piece here, was reformed in the mid-1990s, and a section in the law said that it should be reviewed to monitor changes. This was done to ensure that if changes impacted negatively on any one group there would be adjustments to those laws. In fact, studies show that women are most negatively affected, more than any other group, even in regions where fewer than 600 hours are required to qualify for regular benefits.

Although the EI regular benefit system is responsive to local labour and market realities, the special benefits under EI are not. This unduly penalizes those who live in high unemployment areas. Women in general are unduly negatively affected, because they form the largest number of part time workers.

Clearly this is an area of disadvantage in a government policy, that is, the Employment Insurance Act. It needs to be amended. It needs to be changed. The number of hours needs to be lowered in order to ensure that all women can qualify when they work. We need to take a look at that.

Again, though, it takes time. Governments move slowly. I have to admit that all governments move slowly. What has to happen is that those equality organizations out there doing the research and the lobbying need to continue to have the government support and the government respect, because otherwise, without that, women have no voice and no ability to impact on government decisions for themselves.

There is another area that is not just about women. This is a family issue and an economic issue as well and, by the way, so is the issue of maternal and parental leave with respect to the hours for women. It is not just a social policy. It is an economic policy. It helps business. It does a tremendous amount for giving families stability in this country. For me, social policy and economic policy are one and the same. There is no major difference. They are connected in all ways.

There is another area I want to talk about that is family policy, social policy and economic policy: child care.

We have been advocating for this for decades. Primarily women have been advocating because they are the most affected in this country. I know a grandmother living near me who says that she was advocating for her daughter and now her daughter is advocating for her kids and still we do not have early education and child care across the country. We did have a national child care program, which the former Liberal government put in place, worth \$5 billion, and which was to be increased, but the current government cancelled it because it is not needed.

Women in this country are still fighting. Poverty among women is increasing. It is a major issue. If women are working part time or are self employed, they do not have parental leave or maternity leave, and now they do not have child care, especially if they are working part time and at more than one job.

Again, the government does not seem to understand that this is a very fundamental part of women and families. It is an economic policy as much as it is a social policy. It is also an educational and developmental policy, a ready to learn policy for children, because every child in this country should have a right to go to school ready to learn. It is fundamentally important.

I do not understand how this government can say that the cuts have had no impact, that it has redirected the money and it is just going to projects. It does not have the impact that it needs to have on changing the conditions of women in this country. The government says that all it has done is just get rid of the funding for equality-seeking organizations, that is all, and they can apply if they want. They can do research as long as they do not use that research to advocate.

I obviously support the third report. I certainly hope the government will review it, reconsider and change its mind with respect to its direction on the Status of Women Canada.

• (1610)

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is a real difference between the two sides of the House.

The changes now have caused action to happen. Over and over again we hear all those grandiose statements, but I wonder why the member's government actually cut total funding for the women's program three times in the last decade if all this concern was there.

On this side of the House, our Minister of Finance has given numerous tax cuts, including a sports credit for children under 16 years of age and \$100 per child under the age of six. It does not matter if it is for single parent families; whatever it is, it is just about children.

In her speech, the member opposite was saying that one in every three mothers does not have access to EI benefits. That is a problem, but what we are trying to do all across the nation is address all children and all families in all forms to make sure that families get benefits.

Yes, advocacy can be done. Advocacy has not been shut down. It is just that we are not paying groups to come to Parliament Hill and advocate. What we would rather do is use that money. Thirty-one cents on the dollar was used previously for women's programs. We want it to be much higher, at a dollar out of a dollar if we could get it that way, and we want those dollars to be used for women's programs.

On this side of the House, there have been so many things done by all the ministries, across all departments. All of them are saying they want to work for families. We are working in collaboration. The Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and the Minister of Health have done numerous things, and more ministers have done more things.

We believe in the status of women. We believe that we have to get rid of the barriers so women can come forward, become educated and be full participants in Canadian society at the economic level, the cultural level and every level. It is very important for all women to have the opportunity to do that.

Routine Proceedings

This \$100 per child really helps a lot of families. We have had feedback from numerous people across the country who are thanking us for it and saying, "We have small children and now we have choice".

• (1615)

Hon. Maria Minna: Mr. Speaker, it is really hard to get at this because the hon. member is mixing apples and oranges. With all due respect to the member, whenever I go back to my riding a lot of families ask me where the early education is and where the child care is. The Conservatives say they are working for families, but they are choosing families. They are choosing winners and losers in families.

First of all, the \$100 is taxed in the hands of the lower income earner. This means that a single mom working and earning money has to pay taxes on that money, but a stay at home mom does not. Income support should support all families equally, both the stay at home moms and the working moms. If that money is taxed in their hands, they are receiving about half, about \$585 or \$600. They do not receive the full \$1,200. The government is choosing winners and losers in families, with all due respect, and that is totally unacceptable.

That is totally unacceptable, and to boot, there is still no national child care. Not one child care space has been created by the government since it took power, not one. Meanwhile, there are reports in my riding, in the local papers and elsewhere, that 3,300 spaces have been lost in Toronto alone as a result of the changes, spaces that the provincial government has to make up for, and there are no other increases coming.

There are actual child care spaces lost as a result of the government's cuts, so let us not talk about who is working for families and who is not. The former Liberal government established the child tax benefit, which was income support for all families who needed assistance. It established parental, maternal and compassionate leave. Then it established a national child care program. Those were three fantastic pieces that gave families real stability, all families, but that is gone and the government is not addressing this at all.

When it comes to women, they are the most affected. We all know that. As for advocacy, okay, they can advocate, says the government, but they just do not have to be funded by Ottawa. Advocacy can go on, says the government, but with all due respect, advocacy is done by women who in many cases do not have the resources, and advocacy is done by volunteers. Taxpayers' dollars should fund advocacy, because through tax credits and tax deductions we fund a great deal of other advocacy done by right of centre organizations in this country, while a lot of the smaller organizations that fight for women's rights cannot afford to do it.

By shutting women down and getting rid of their voices in regard to their ability to fight for their rights and break down barriers, the government, we see unfortunately, means that women cannot rely on this Parliament to do it for them. I believe the hon. member already knows the answer to all of this.

Mrs. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have heard that the new Conservative government does not want women's groups to come to Ottawa to advocate. I also know that we in the Status of Women committee have heard from a

number of these groups that have been very clear in their concern that government policy, as it affects women, as it affects their equality and their future, needs to be advised upon by all of those groups in the country.

Could the member please comment on the future that she sees for these women's groups in regard to their ability to do the work that needs to be done and also on the importance of that work?

Hon. Maria Minna: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, a lot of organizations have been coming before the standing committee during the last number of hearings that we have had—and we are still having a few more—organizations that in fact are being affected very directly by the cuts and by the change of criteria. It is not just the cuts, which are bad enough, but the change of criteria that have had impacts on these organizations. Most if not all of them have indicated that they will have difficulty in being able to maintain the work they do. Yes, they will continue struggle, as they have in the past.

When they came to Ottawa to fight for their rights in the charter, there was no money available. Some of them managed to come, but the fact of the matter is that for women to have their rights respected they need assistance to continue to do the research and the advocacy. Also, in regard to informing the women of Canada, the education and the programs, all of it takes money. All of that will be hurt badly. I suspect that a great deal of it will die off. That is the reality of it. Whether we like it or not, over time that will die off. Things will be in a very sad state, because it will be to the detriment of women that they will lose the ability to speak and to fight for their own causes.

• (1620)

Mr. Bruce Stanton (Simcoe North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the member opposite with regard to the issues that she presented, especially as they relate to the previous government. I noted with interest that the first recommendation of the third report reiterates the recommendation of the report of February 10, 2005, which was calling on the federal government, the hon. member's government at that time, to increase funding to the women's program at Status of Women Canada by at least 25%.

I would be interested to know from the hon. member how much of that 25% increase she and her government in fact recommended. If she did not, why not?

Hon. Maria Minna: Mr. Speaker, very simply, obviously the women in our caucus supported that 25%. The government did not do it, but that only shows the fact that it needed to be done.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: You didn't get it done.

Hon. Maria Minna: The hon. member can have slogans all he likes, but the fact of the matter is that not only did the Conservatives not increase it, they cut it. They are going in the opposite direction. My colleagues were fighting to get it increased, but what the Conservatives have done is cut it, bring it back and then change the criteria, shutting out all advocacy and research from women's organizations at the same time. When they eliminate social justice, legal status and things like that from their criteria, what is left?

Routine Proceedings

Then the government extended funding to for profit organizations and religious groups. I ask those members to tell me what that is supposed to do in this country. Which for profit organizations? Is Ford going to start programs with women or with women employees? That is possible, but I still think that what the government has done is absolutely unacceptable.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Johanne Deschamps (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am young, but for my whole life, I have been concerned about the status of women in our society.

I myself have volunteered with various organizations to help improve women's lives economically, politically and socially. Obviously, as a woman, I find the motion before us today very meaningful because it touches the core of who I am and what I believe.

Status of Women Canada was a model of social development and support for women. That is, until the current minister, the member for Durham, arrived. Unfortunately, the minister's lack of leadership has turned it into an empty shell, completely lacking meaning and realism.

Status of Women Canada's three priorities no longer have meaning. Originally, those priorities were: improving women's economic autonomy and well-being; eliminating systemic violence against women and children; and advancing women's human rights. Those are still supposed to be the department's priorities.

To achieve those three priorities, Status of Women Canada worked to ensure that legislation, policies and programs advanced women's equality throughout the federal government; conducted gender-based analysis of legislation, policies and programs, and recommended changes to ensure that government decisions were of benefit to all Canadians, women and men equally; promoted the implementation of gender-based policy analysis throughout the federal government; promoted and monitored the progress of the status of women throughout the country; funded policy research and integrated the research findings into the policy development process; provided financial, technical and professional assistance to women's and other voluntary organizations at community, regional and national levels, to support actions which advanced women's equality; and collaborated with provincial and territorial governments, international organizations and other countries, women's organizations, and other stakeholders, to address women's equality issues.

Unfortunately, all of this work is now compromised because of the actions of the Conservative government, the member for Calgary Southwest and the Minister of Status of Women and member for Durham.

Since 1973, the Women's Program has been providing funding for women's organizations and equal rights organizations. Its mandate is clear: to support action by women's organizations and other partners seeking to advance equality for women by addressing women's economic, social, political and legal situation. This support includes financial support and technical support, such as linking different groups that share a common goal, helping groups gain access to various parts of the government, or providing access to resource materials and tools that help organizations to work more effectively.

This program distributed \$10 million every year for projects to improve the economic situation of women, to eliminate systematic violence against women and to achieve social justice.

In response to all this work, often performed by thousands of women and men volunteering their time, the Conservative government imposed administrative cuts totalling more than \$2.5 million for two years, or \$5 million. Does the minister still believe that this is just trimming the fat? This cut of \$5 million has led to the closure of 12 of 16 regional offices, which means eliminating fundamental regional expertise concerning knowledge of various local realities.

It is crucial that front-line organizations have the support they need, as well as a listening ear and understanding on the part of the program and Status of Women Canada, without which their task will be considerably more difficult. This could be very discouraging for many people. In this regard, the end of the National Association of Women and the Law organization is a loud wake-up call.

Indeed, the role of regional officers is to establish strong ties among local organizations to support them in their work for women.

• (1625)

Eliminating these offices and concentrating decision making in four major centres will only mean less knowledge of the needs of women's groups and will leave groups in the affected areas feeling abandoned.

This is just one example of the long-term effects these cuts will have. When we consider the report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, it is easy to see that the minister does not care about her parliamentary colleagues' opinion.

On May 12, the committee, which I have sat on since I was re-elected in January 2006, adopted its third report, which called for 10 actions by the government. Here are the 10 recommendations.

Recommendation 1 reads as follows:

The Committee reiterates the recommendation made in its 10 February 2005 report, calling on the federal government to increase funding to the Women's Program at Status of Women Canada by at least 25% for investments in women's groups and equality seeking organizations.

Yet the Conservative government cut 20% of Status of Women Canada's total budget, in addition to eliminating the court challenges program, to ensure that no women's advocacy group would ever have the means to challenge the government in court.

"Many women's organizations today are financially fragile because they depend on a web of unpredictable, short-term, targeted project funds", the Child Care Coalition of Manitoba told the committee.

It is crucial to provide these organizations with core funding so that they have the minimum they need to operate and are freed of the stress that comes from the fear of losing their funding.

Recommendation 2 reads as follows:

Routine Proceedings

That Status of Women Canada immediately take advantage of the ongoing review of the Women's Program to revise the funding to organizations by introducing a mix of core funding and project funding.

The groups that participated in the roundtables organized by the committee on May 3 and 10, 2005, agreed that there was a need for both project funding and core funding. They told the committee that sustaining funding allows them to cover infrastructure costs and to leverage more funding.

Recommendation 3 reads as follows:

That the Government of Canada, through its central agencies, ensure that all new and renewed funding programs incorporate the commitments undertaken by the Government of Canada in the Code of Good Practice on Funding, particularly the commitment to "reach decisions about the funding process through collaborative processes".

Recommendation 4, which is related to the previous recommendation, reads as follows:

That Status of Women Canada take advantage of the current evaluation of the Women's Program to implement new funding processes which could position Status of Women Canada as a leader in the application of the Code of Good Practice on Funding.

The Coalition for Women's Equality said in committee that, "Change is necessary, it must come soon. The particulars of a formula require a coast to coast conversation amongst women's groups at all levels to come to an understanding of what will foster the achievements of equality guarantees in Canada".

It is very important to involve equal rights organizations in the valid consultation process on the direction of funding under the Women's Program.

Recommendation 5 reads:

That Status of Women Canada immediately engage equality-seeking organizations in meaningful consultation to determine future directions for the Women's Program.

Sharon Taylor, executive director of Wolseley Family Place, said, "Who wants to do this job any more? We're supposed to be manager of the project, we're supposed to find funds, we're supposed to do the front line work, and the list goes on. When does it end?"

We have to prevent the turnover of staff and provide staff with competitive levels of compensation which recognize the valuable contribution of the voluntary sector.

• (1630)

The Canadian Council on Social Development noted that, "if an organization does not price what it sells in such a way as to completely cover all of its costs, it will soon cease to exist".

Recommendation 6 reads:

That Status of Women Canada develop fair and consistent practices which recognize the indirect costs to be covered by Women's Program funding, and that these practices be developed in collaboration with equality seeking organizations.

Most witnesses indicated that they wished to avoid at all costs the financing models that would pit organizations against one another in order to obtain their share of the increasingly limited funding.

Recommendations 7, 8 and 9 read:

That Status of Women Canada work with other federal government departments to raise awareness about the importance of funding gender projects relevant to the funding mandates of those departments.

That Status of Women Canada explore eligibility criteria for Women's Program funding through meaningful consultation with equality seeking organizations.

That Status of Women Canada act now to enter into funding agreements for a minimum period of three years.

Funding issues are clearly very important to equality seeking organizations throughout the country. All comments are along the same lines. Funding of groups that promote women's rights must be increased by at least 25%. These organizations should receive core funding and local realities should also be taken into account.

Recommendation 10 reads:

That the Standing Committee on the Status of Women be granted intervenor status in the ongoing review of the Women's Program to ensure that the comments contained in this report are appropriately reflected in the review process.

The collaboration of women's groups and equality seeking organizations is vital to the development of a new Women's Program funding mechanism.

Although women are considered equal before the law, the reality remains quite different. Even today, they earn only 71% of a man's salary for a full-time job. More than 50% of women who are single, widowed or divorced and over 65 years old live in poverty.

Although women make up over 50% of the population, we hold only 21% of the seats in this House. While women make up only 11% of the Conservative caucus, there are three times more women in the Bloc caucus.

Here is an argument that will surely be easy to understand and may even reach the Conservatives because it involves money. Violence against women costs an estimated \$4.2 billion per year in direct and indirect costs related to the justice system, health care, social services and loss of productivity. Status of Women's budget, which represents a small fraction of those costs, is actually an investment in prevention. If they would have us believe that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, they should probably increase Status of Women's budget.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that the Bloc Québécois finds the cuts to Status of Women troubling and indicative of how important this government thinks women are. The Bloc Québécois is asking the government to backtrack and cancel cuts to Status of Women. Those cuts were not really about saving money; they happened because of the government's fiercely ideological approach, which is not in line with Quebeckers' values.

Cutting Status of Women's funding and sabotaging its mandate will probably lead to the disintegration of the very organization that is in a position to make things happen.

I am waging this battle from within a party, the Bloc Québécois, that supports Quebec sovereignty. Until Quebec becomes a country, it will have to live with decisions made by the Canadian majority, even though they are not in line with its own ambitions.

• (1635)

The Bloc Québécois has always stood up for women's rights and will continue to do so. It is clear that this government is reactionary and misogynistic. The Bloc will always stand up to the government to protect women's rights until the day we become independent.

Routine Proceedings

[English]

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the contributions she makes on a daily basis to the Status of Women committee.

Throughout the year, both the member opposite and the Bloc have been extremely helpful in our study on the issue of human trafficking and have done many things. I am sure the member opposite is aware that our minister will soon be meeting with the Quebec minister in charge of Status of Women and I know there will be dialogue there as well.

Is the member opposite saying that she would prefer the moneys to go into administration rather than directly into women's programs for women in her riding in Quebec?

[Translation]

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for her question. She sits with me on the Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

I would like to tell her that we hope to see an increase in the funding allocated to Status of Women Canada, but not just on an administrative level, since we know what has resulted from these cuts: the closure of 12 offices out of 14.

I come from a rural area where women live very far away from the major centres. The only contact they have with these centres is either with a representative from a government agency or with an officer. They may feel a little more understood in terms of the complexity of what they are going through and their daily problems. Distancing them from these centres causes them additional stress.

We are entirely in favour of adding money on an administrative level. In my opinion, we could also reallocate money to the Women's Program, as recommended in the report. It does recommend an increase.

These recommendations are the result of hearings with a number of witnesses who came to committee to share their concerns. To ensure the continuity of what they are doing and what they offer, they would like an increase in their budgets. The recommendation calls for a 25% increase to the current budget.

● (1640)

[English]

Hon. Maria Minna (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the things that we keep hearing over and over again from the government side and, of course, at committee, as the member knows and as she mentioned, is that the cuts are only administrative and that it is us on this side of the House who want to waste money on administration instead of using the money for women's programs, which is not the case.

I wonder if the hon. member could tell us what the impact of the closing of those 12 offices will be, especially in some rural parts and other parts of the country, in terms of access and actually being able to serve women's organizations on the ground, whether they be advocacy organizations or other organizations that provide direct service to women with their specific programming, as well as what impact the elimination of funding for equality seeking organizations will have on the women in her riding.

[Translation]

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her question. She is also a member of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

In response, I would like to refer to the testimony of an organization we received during a meeting of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. The organization was the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre, which is located in the riding of the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

That organization was founded in 1983. It is a rural women's community organization that gathers information, and provides services and support programs for women of all ages and all backgrounds, in an environment that is sensitive to the needs of women. The women shared their fears concerning the closure of the offices. They told us that, in their view, it is crucial that Status of Women Canada maintain regional offices. Given that the program officer in the sector is based in Nova Scotia, she was able to establish solid working relationships among women's rights organizations.

The program officers working in smaller regions are in a better position to understand the unique character of the various sectors of the region. This is particularly important for women who live in rural settings, because the problems they face are considerably different than those of women in large urban centres. Often, in rural settings, the problems affect the coastal, agricultural and northern sectors, and sectors rich in primary resources or only one resource. It was important for those women, and they came to tell the committee to maintain the regional offices.

Mr. Yvon Lévesque (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague for her presentation. This government is obsessed with decreasing taxes. When deciding to close a regional office, did the committee determine the additional costs incurred by women who need a service and will now have to go and find this service on their own?

To what extent can we consider this a real increase in taxation of these women?

● (1645)

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question. It is a very specific question and I cannot answer with very precise figures. However, when an office is closed, it does limit the availability of that service for some women. Regional offices have usually been located near these women. When these offices are closed, women are often literally distanced.

These individuals have to pay for telephone calls and must even travel, often many kilometres, to urban centres in order to submit their projects. In my opinion, this is a way of discouraging organizations from submitting projects given the lack of information and the distances. These people are often discouraged and turn to other activities to try to ensure the survival of what is already in place nearby.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: the hon. member for Nanaimo—Cowichan, Indian Affairs.

Routine Proceedings

[English]

Mr. Bruce Stanton (Simcoe North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as hon. members will know, the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women has been working very hard to address the concerns of women's organizations and women's groups from coast to coast.

The central issue raised in the third report of the committee focuses on the renewal of the women's program and the way in which we fund women's organizations. As a member of the Status of Women committee, I can tell the House that we have been working very diligently on the important issues that I am confident will have a direct impact on women's lives.

I realize that the recommendations brought forward in the third report focus attention on women's program specifically. However, I thought that today I would concentrate my remarks on what it is that Canada's new government is doing to help answer some of the questions that are inherent in that report.

I believe that an examination of the record will show that our new government has been taking action, as opposed to the former government's dithering and delaying when it came to women's issues.

The minister responsible for the Status of Women was very busy this past year. I am pleased to tell the House that she has held a number of round table consultations. The minister was seeking advice on key areas of action to advance women's issues and I know she was extremely pleased with how productive these sessions actually were.

The round tables provided the minister with excellent insight into the organizational structures regarding issues of equality as a societal norm. The round tables brought together women's groups, academics and other organizations for an exchange of ideas related to equality for women. Issues of economic independence of women and violence against women were a key focus of these discussions.

While Canada has made considerable progress in advancing gender equality, the minister recognizes that there is still much more work to be done to achieve the full participation of women in Canadian society. She is committed to ensuring that all initiatives within her mandate, such as the women's program, supports key government priorities, including accountability and the achievement of real results, concrete outcomes for women in their communities.

The recent renewal of the women's program provided an opportunity to address key aspects of fulfilling the women's agenda. It allowed us as a government to ensure that money would get directly into the hands of those who need it most.

As members of the committee will know, there has been a great deal of discussion around the renewed terms and conditions of the women's program and the new criteria for the funding. I strongly believe that advocacy does have a role to play but Canada's new government believes that now is the time to act and we want to focus taxpayer dollars toward action.

We already have the studies. We already know there are problems. Instead of spending more time discussing these issues, our government is looking at tangible ways we can make a difference right now in the community where it matters most.

For example, the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development is dealing with the issue of matrimonial real property rights for aboriginal women. Our government increased funding to on reserve family violence shelters by \$6 million.

As well, the minister announced \$450 million for improving the water supply, housing on reserve, educational outcomes and socio-economic conditions for aboriginal women, children and families. This is real money in the hands of organizations that are on the ground working to make a real difference.

In terms of human trafficking, the member for Kildonan—St. Paul touched on this. The former minister of citizenship and immigration developed a program to give victims of human trafficking the chance for temporary visas. We know that human trafficking is on the rise and the majority of those trafficked are women. They are brought to this country and forced into a life of prostitution and despair. Instead of being treated as criminals, our government will issue temporary resident permits for up to 120 days and will provide the necessary health care that is required without any cost to them.

As the minister has mentioned before, women's issues are issues that all Conservative cabinet ministers are concerned with. I will give some examples.

- (1650)

The Minister of Human Resources and Social Development announced \$4.8 million to help retrain women on social assistance in New Brunswick. This is a three year pilot project, Partners Building Futures, that will help women on social assistance get the training that is necessary to find jobs.

As well, the minister has announced legislation, Bill C-36, that makes it easier for Canadians to access the guaranteed income supplement. The guaranteed income supplement, or GIS as we call it, pays out \$6.2 billion a year and goes to about 1.5 million low income seniors, most of whom are women. This is real change that will affect real people where they live.

In one short year our government has introduced the universal child care benefit to help women and their families in their homes. We have implemented patient wait time guarantees for prenatal aboriginal women. We have expanded eligibility for compassionate caregivers, most of whom are women. We have introduced pension splitting for senior citizens. We have targeted tax cuts like the GST, the textbook credit, and credit for families with children involved in physical activity. These are real changes, ideas and policies that are making a difference in the lives of Canadian women, but there is more.

We have and we continue to demonstrate our commitment to women's safety and health. Through the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, \$2 billion is provided annually to construct and maintain safe, quality and affordable housing for 633,000 lower income households right across Canada. Our 2006 budget also provided a one time grant of up to \$1.4 billion in new money as extra support for affordable housing.

Routine Proceedings

This government has acted on its commitment to women and employment. We have initiated a new apprenticeship job creation tax credit that provides tax credits to employers who hire women apprentices entering the skilled trades and a new tools tax deduction which will help them get the tools they need to succeed in their careers.

This government has also committed to forming a new foreign credential recognition agency to ensure foreign trained immigrants meet Canadian standards while getting those who are trained and ready to work in their fields of expertise into the workforce more quickly. We heard time and again through the various testimony on our comprehensive report on human trafficking that in fact the issues around visible minorities and immigrant women were most important.

Canada's new government cares about welcoming newcomers and helping them integrate into our society. We value community efforts that are supported by partnerships with the provinces, municipalities and community organizations. I am proud that our government has provided for increased settlement funding.

Budget 2006 committed an additional \$307 million to these programs over the next two years, funding that will benefit all newcomers, including and especially immigrant women. This is new money that will go to our partners in the immigration system to help newcomers become full members of the Canadian family. It means additional funding for programs for English or French as a second language and more funding for settlement services and employment programs for new Canadians.

I should point out that language training for newcomers to Canada includes support for the care and supervision of children to give parents the time and freedom to attend these classes, a benefit of particular importance to immigrant women. We are also improving women's education by offering many financial assistance programs that enable Canadian women to access learning opportunities and upgrade their skills through post-secondary education.

Let me remind all members of the House that unlike the previous Liberal government, this is a government of action. As promised, we lowered the GST from 7% to 6%. We delivered over \$20 billion in tax relief for individuals. We delivered tax credits to help Canadian families, including a children's fitness credit for up to \$500 for physical fitness programs; a tax credit on the cost of textbooks of about \$80 per typical post-secondary student; a \$2,000 tax credit for employers who hire apprentices; and the new Canada employment credit, a tax credit on employment income of up to \$500.

● (1655)

We have acted on our commitment to safer streets through a major investment of nearly \$200 million over two years for RCMP training and recruitment. We will continue to act on this commitment by getting tough on crime. We will do that by combating illegal drugs, by implementing tougher laws and by protecting our youth from sexual predators by raising the age of protection.

We have met with Canadians and stakeholders to seek their views on key areas of action to support women's participation in all facets of society. We are looking closely at ways to improve our policies,

our processes and practices for funding programs in the areas of accountability, efficiency and effectiveness.

As a member of the committee, I look forward to working with my colleagues to find ways to bring about the full participation of women in the economic, social, political and cultural life of Canada.

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite read an impressive list of programs and policies that his government is funding. It is very interesting because those are programs and policies that were brought in by the last government, our government. I suppose I would like to ask the member if he means that we should be thankful that he did not cut those programs, because he is just repeating them.

The member talked about a whole lot of initiatives that are all gender neutral. The whole concept of equality for women is that women suffer certain challenges and barriers to achieving equality in our society. When the member speaks of gender neutral policies and uses glib words like "crime prevention", et cetera, women require very special initiatives to assist them in overcoming the barriers they face. What part of that does the member and his new government not understand?

Mr. Bruce Stanton: Mr. Speaker, the important mandate that has been set before the Standing Committee on the Status of Women is in fact to define and to help the very programs that cater to those very specific women's issues of which she speaks. My point is that beyond that, we have a government and a cabinet that is acting on a broad range of economic issues and benefits backed up by our budget 2006 to make sure that our policies and programs are supporting women who are vulnerable, who are being impacted by these societal issues.

We are getting at a broad range of issues, economic and social. In addition we are getting right to the heart of issues relating to vulnerable women and backing them up through Status of Women Canada by making sure that the dollars through the women's program, which is fully funded this year, \$10.8 million, get into the hands of community groups and organizations that will see those dollars get to women's needs in the community where they are most needed.

● (1700)

Mrs. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, like my colleague before me, I heard a list of things that the government has purportedly done for women.

What tangible progress has been made to advance the needs of women in regard to proactive pay equity legislation, the needed new child care spaces and affordable housing?

Routine Proceedings

Mr. Bruce Stanton: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned in my remarks, through programs that are offered through the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, on the question of social housing, I touched on a couple, such as 633,000 households across Canada supported through funding programs that help provide access to affordable housing. In addition, there is a \$1.4 billion grant, new funds that are available specifically for that purpose.

As I said before, the key focus is to get public dollars into the hands of community groups that understand where the needs really are. We see that through programs through Status of Women Canada, the additional \$5 million that is coming on board as of April 1, 2007. No money has been lost on this, but we are making sure that public dollars are not siphoned off and consumed at a national level where, for many years, they have not been getting down to where the dollars are mostly needed.

We are going to continue that focus. It is a theme that this government supports. We will continue to do it. It is a benefit to all women in Canada.

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on his excellent overview of what the government is doing in addressing the needs of women.

I was in Montreal a couple of weeks ago and I happened to pick up a copy of the Montreal *Gazette*. An article caught my attention. It was about how well women are doing in some sectors. The article was part of a series called “Women learn better, faster”. It talked about how women dominating at universities and it listed statistics for both McGill and the University of Montreal. For a point of information, the percentage of women in medicine is 60.6%; in law, 53.6%; in dentistry, 54.6%; in architecture, 66.9%; in science, 52.3%; even in agriculture and environmental science, 68.4%; in commerce, 52.9%, in education, 78.9%; in nursing 96.7%; and in occupational therapy, 89.6%. At the University of Montreal the percentage of women in medicine is 71%; in law, 62.9%; and in dentistry, 64%.

We want to acknowledge that women are doing very well in some ways, but we know there are other women who are facing challenges. The member accurately pointed out that we are dealing with situations on reserves and what we are doing to help with real property rights on reserves.

I want to ask the member about a particular project I heard mentioned but I did not get details about. I think it was a new program in Prince George called the New Hope Society that was receiving funding. This program helps women to get out of prostitution. The member is on the committee, and I wonder if he has any information about the success of this program.

Mr. Bruce Stanton: Mr. Speaker, the program is one, if not the first, program to be approved under the new terms and conditions of Status of Women Canada. It is particularly important because it deals with issues around sexual slavery, the very issues that our committee dealt with in depth this past fall.

We saw the worst set of conditions that could impact the plight of women, not just women born here in Canada, but those who come to Canada for completely proper and economic reasons to build a future but inadvertently find themselves in conditions where they are forced

into slavery through organized crime and through contacts who deceive them.

As I referred to earlier, this program gets support to the people who need it most, just like the temporary visa program and all of the financial supports that are there. We are going to continue to work on this. I would agree with the hon. member that women are doing very well in Canada, but I would underline that we still have more work to do. We will continue to do that.

• (1705)

Hon. Maria Minna (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member referred to immigrant women and programs, language training and so on.

I wonder if the hon. member knows that one of the reasons women are getting into the English as a second language programs is that in 1986 or thereabouts when the former Conservative government was in power, I was part of a national group of women who initiated a charter challenge because under that government immigrant women were not eligible for English as a second language. Only men were allowed to apply for that program because it was assumed that men were the head of the household. If it had not been for the advocacy role and the research done by women on the ground who forced the government's hand to eventually back-off, it would never have happened.

I ask the hon. member again, why is the government so convinced that because equality is a word that appears in the charter somewhere it is a de facto reality in women's lives when it is not? Why have we delisted equality provisions from the criteria? It is not just the funding of the advocacy organizations. I would like the hon. member to tell me because the criteria as I read it said that Status of Women Canada is responsible for promoting the equality of women in Canada and that is gone completely now.

Mr. Bruce Stanton: Mr. Speaker, the point is that for the very reasons that the member outlines I was particularly pleased and proud to see that in the new terms and conditions for funding of the women's program, there are three specific areas, one of which is a focus on funding visible minorities and immigrant women. There is an understanding of where the needs are, what the history is, and that there needs to continue to be a focus on that type of funding. We are glad to see it there in the new terms and conditions.

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for St. Paul's.

I stand here in support the third report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, but why am I not surprised that the new Conservative, new, neo, whatever we want to use as the term, government has presided over the gutting of women's programs. It has closed 12 out of 14 status of women's offices and cut by over 50% the funding of women's groups which will happen in the next fiscal year.

I am not surprised because we saw this happen in 1989 under another Conservative government when women's programs were cut by 25%.

Routine Proceedings

It is not simply the cutting of women's programs. I think the hon. member for Beaches—East York asked a very important question. She asked, "Why is it that in this new iteration of this new Conservative government, the word equality has been taken out of the mandate of the Status of Women Canada?"

I would like to know why because the whole issue is about the equality of women. Women we know are some of the most vulnerable in our society.

Let me tell the House and these are not my statistics. They come from Statistics Canada. They come from university studies everywhere. We know that of those who suffer domestic violence or family violence and who are kidnapped, 98% of persons whom this happens to are women; 47% of single families are headed by women and these are poor families; one in every three seniors lives in poverty; and women in Canada who in spite of their education are making 71¢ for every \$1 that a man makes. We know that the United Nations speaks always of the feminization of poverty. Women are unequal.

We listen to this concept and the language that it is all wonderful and generic, and that we are doing things for families, and families are important. However, we fail to recognize that in today's society families come in different sizes and in different shapes. The families that are headed up by single parents who are women are the poorest in our society. These are the most vulnerable.

When a government decides that it is going to trim the fat and it does so on the backs of the most vulnerable in our society, one has to ask oneself, what is the agenda of a particular government like this? We know that aboriginal women, for instance, are the poorest, the lowest in health status and the largest number of victims of violence in our society. Yet the Kelowna accord was cancelled.

We hear talk on the one hand of all the wonderful things that are being done, and as I pointed out earlier on, these were sort of iterations of programs that we had already put in place. We heard another member stand from the new Conservative government and speak about all of the wonderful gains that women have made in society. Those gains were hard fought. They were hard won gains. They came after 13 years of solid programs put in by the previous government which increased funding that was cut by the Conservative government. In 1989 we increased that funding in order to provide for programs and projects for women.

We left advocacy as a key cause. We hear a lot about advocacy as if it is a bad thing. Advocacy is important for any vulnerable group, any group that is not able to speak out for itself. Advocacy is public education. Advocacy brings the truth and the facts home, so that people, governments and policy makers understand the status of that particular group. That is what advocacy is for.

Women need a voice. Women's voices have not been heard. It was only in 1960 that aboriginal women got the vote. It was only 1929 that women were considered to be persons in this country. We have not come such a long way. We continue to fight.

Pay equity was something that came about in the last Liberal government. We brought about pay equity. We took to the United Nations terms of diversity and the differences in women's status that come not only from their gender but from their race, language,

ethnicity and sexual orientation. We talked about how important it was to analyze the impacts of that difference on society.

● (1710)

Women are not simply men in a dress. Women are different. We are anatomically different. We are physiologically different and we are psychological different. That very difference has created extraordinary barriers that are very difficult for women to have to deal with.

One of those barriers comes from simply having children. We know that has in fact created the system in which women are making 71¢ to the dollar because women lose lifetime earnings when they drop in and out of work in order to care for their children.

If it were not for the Liberals who put in, away back in Pierre Trudeau's day, the issue of that seven years off for child rearing so women could continue their lifetime earnings and have some kind of CPP when they retire, we would have more than one in every three senior women living in poverty in this country.

I just do not get the government's whole idea of cutting by 50% women's programs. Why? We, as a Liberal government, brought in something called gender based analysis. I heard one of the members speaking about how women's equality and women's programs are not only about the Status of Women Canada. This is true.

Under gender based analysis, we had put in a fairly sizeable amount of money outside of the women's programs simply to create a swat team that would go into every department, get the aggregated data, and start analyzing the impact of public policy in each department on women and on men based on the reality of their lives. Because of that, we initiated a lot of changes. We realized that a lot of single mothers could not get a post-secondary education, so we created grants for them in one of our tax changes. That was a finance decision, a finance policy. Because women were the largest number of victims of violence, we realized that gender violence was an issue in terms of refugee status. Canada was the country that started that.

We looked at the issue of creating houses for women to find a place to go as a result of domestic violence. That was the money that was so proudly spoken of by an hon. member across as having come from his government, but that was brought in six years ago in order to fund half-way houses. It came up to \$2 billion in order to help women to find a place to live so that they could escape violence and find a safe place to be.

Routine Proceedings

These are the things that have changed things. We started up programs so that women could go into earth sciences. We created grants for that because we realized that women were not going into earth sciences. The gains that women seem to have made over the last few years have been gains that were brought in by programs that were gutted.

The hon. member, my colleague from Beaches—East York, was saying that one of the big changes came about because her organization, back in the 1980s, used the court challenges programs to bring forward the reality of their plight. That was advocacy. It was advocacy first and then seeking access under the law to make changes in public policy.

Many of the changes that women currently enjoy in our society came about because of the court challenges program set up by Pierre Trudeau, cancelled by the Conservative government, and brought back in by our government when it came into power in 1993. It has now gone, so women, women who are poor, immigrant women, no longer have that access to be able to change things for themselves, to be able to seek remedies through the courts. That program that was there for them has been gutted.

When the government talks about what it is doing for women, one has to wonder what exactly it means and what exactly it is talking about. There seems to be a word called “women” and the fact that I remember sitting in the House 15 years ago when the Reform Party spoke about the fact that women are a special interest group.

Mr. Speaker, 52% of our population are seen to be a special interest group and that has permeated all of the public policy.

Let us look at what was changed under the women's programs. First and foremost, we talked about cuts in 14 departments. We have cut 12 of them. The third largest city in Canada, Vancouver, no longer has a women's program. Yet, we know that in east Vancouver we have women who are the poorest, women who are being murdered daily because they are victims of violence. We see this, and yet Vancouver and British Columbia cannot have access any more to a Status of Women's office because that was cut. That was trimming the fat.

I am not surprised at this new Conservative, neo-Conservative government, making these changes, but I was a little surprised when the trimming of the fat occurred in the September 2006 fat trimming exercise in the House, and when the Liberals brought in a motion to decry this, to stop it in October, the New Democratic Party did not support that motion.

• (1715)

I am surprised that the NDP is now speaking out for these issues when it had an opportunity—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): Questions and comments. The hon. member for Kildonan—St. Paul.

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I listened to all this hyperbole, I heard quite clearly that the past government had A for announcements and D for delivery. We saw that in the child care program, pay equity, violence against women and matrimonial rights.

It took 13 long years to deliver programs and today I hear that all these were really the former Liberal programs and nothing to do with the new Conservative government. It was all Liberal programs.

Unfortunately, the Canadian public understood that after 13 years if there is not an A for delivery, it does not matter how many bags of money fly out of airplanes. It does not matter how many announcements are made. People want action and that is the difference here. The minister and the government have actually taken the precious taxpayers' money and put it straight into programs for women. Is the member opposite not supportive of that \$5 million going directly to programs for women?

• (1720)

Hon. Hedy Fry: Mr. Speaker, I suppose I should be happy that we have at least got something left in that program budget. The hon. member knows that her government has cut that budget by 50%, so to ask if I am not happy for a pittance, of course, people who are needy are happy for whatever crumbs are thrown to them.

The hon. member talks about child care and D for delivery. We signed agreements with the provinces. The word and bond of the federal government went into those signed agreements and they were broken. They were one of the first things that were nullified by the current government and it dares to speak about giving \$100 a month to people and at the same time clawing it back by adding a half per cent to the lowest income bracket in the country.

Let us talk about rhetoric and talk about the facts. I think women's equality has been set back decades, into the dark ages, by the government.

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her intervention but I would like to set the record a little straight. When she talked about us not supporting a motion, it was a motion that actually did not talk about the true record of the Liberal government. One of the things I wanted to ask the member about was the Liberal government's failure to institute a gender based analysis in its budgets.

The group called FAFIA, the Feminist Alliance for International Action, did a detailed analysis of the budgets over 10 years that the Liberals had put forward and talked about the adverse impact for women. Let us just talk about employment insurance as one example, about how employment insurance legislation was not subject to a gender based analysis which meant that women actually lost benefits under that particular piece of legislation.

I wonder if the member could comment on why there was no gender based analysis done on successive budgets under the Liberal regime.

Hon. Hedy Fry: Mr. Speaker, that is not true. Every single year gender based analysis was done on the budget by Status of Women Canada. Every single year we pointed out things that could have been done that were not done.

Routine Proceedings

Obviously, as the House has heard before, some of the changes that we made were slow but they were made. There was the example of the whole issue of suggesting that child care was not done. We made child care for Inuits possible the day we came in because it was a fiduciary responsibility of the government. But we could not do it because it was a provincial jurisdiction and we had to wait until the provinces were ready to sign on the dotted line. Finally we got to that and it was cancelled with one stroke of the pen by the new Conservative government.

We moved forward on an increasing number of programs with gender based analysis. The government put aside a separate fund to specifically do gender based analysis on every single department. Every time something was brought to cabinet there had to be a piece of gender based analysis on the impact it would have on men and on women.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to thank the member for Vancouver Centre for all the work she did as minister responsible.

In response to the member for Nanaimo—Cowichan, I would like to inform her that every year during the budget, one of the most important analyses of the budget that we received was from the department when the member for Vancouver Centre was the minister. There was a conference call with all the women's groups around the country which resulted in a serious impact analysis of what the budget would and could do for women.

There is no question that we need to go further. Former minister Frulla appointed a very important committee to look at how we would do accountability on the gender issues across government, and that was an important report.

I think the debate today concerns whether we go forward or go back. The basic premise of good management is that if it is measured it gets noticed and if it gets noticed it gets done. However, unless we have good programs on the ground and government departments that work with one another to actually see how women are faring in this country we will not get it right.

I stand here today thinking about Saturday morning and having breakfast with Doris Anderson. Doris Anderson, to me, is a hero who, when she turned 80, reminded us all of when women needed somebody to co-sign a cheque, of when women could not get a mortgage and that we have come a long way.

What we are really worried about today, what people like Doris Anderson, Monique Bégin and even Flora MacDonald are seriously worried about is whether we are going to turn back the clock on the gains we have made.

Today we are being reminded that government reports to Parliament, not the other way around, and that when government reports to Parliament it means that when Parliament passes motions on things like child care, the Kelowna accord, the way in which aboriginal and immigrant women are living and the situations in which they find themselves, we must do better.

It is because of spectacular organizations that the member for Nanaimo—Cowichan mentioned, such as FAFIA and the National Association of Women and the Law, the kinds of organizations that have been funded by Status of Women Canada, that we have been

able to be accountable, but it is also our international obligations with CEDAW and the United Nations' responsibilities that we as a country have signed onto and we as a country must fulfill.

Without the kind of funding that Status of Women Canada has been able to give and the kinds of organizations actually on the ground, it is impossible to get it right. It is instructive to look back at the importance that funding these women's groups have brought us. This funding is why women's equality still matters.

However, it is the government of the day that seems to have taken the word equality out of every aspect, every document and every website. It does not like the word equality and it is continuing to listen to organizations like REAL Women that has on its website "Women's rights but not at the expense of human rights", whatever on earth that means, when we know from the great people like Irwin Cotler and Stephen Lewis that women's rights are human rights. If we cannot get women's rights correct and there is no real equality then we should be ashamed as a country that is supposed to be setting an example for the world.

In the panel report that I mentioned, entitled "Equality for Women: Beyond the Illusion", released in July 2006, it reiterates the reality of the fact of how much more work we can do. I will quote from it as I think it is an extraordinary synopsis of where we are. The report states:

● (1725)

—many people think that we have truly achieved equality for women in Canada. Much as we would like it to be so, it is simply not the case. In 2005, only one in five members of Parliament is a woman. The same holds true in general across the legislatures of the provinces and territories. Girls are the victims of more than four out of five cases of sexual assault on minors. Four out of five one parent-families are headed by women. The employment income gap between male and female university graduates who work full time has widened. Women working full time still earn only 71 cents for every dollar that men make. Women do the large majority of the unpaid work in Canada. ...The most recent figures show that 38 per cent of Aboriginal women live in low income situations. So, too, do 35 per cent of lone mothers and 27 per cent of immigrant women. Immigrant women working full time earn 58 cents for every dollar earned by Canadian born men—

We are not there yet and it is so important when we look at the things that we fought for and won. It was because of things like the commission on the Status of Women and then the organizations that ended up being funded when we first began the women's programs in the Canadian government.

Routine Proceedings

From maternity benefits to economic justice for wives to protect their matrimonial homes, the custody and access changes, the abolition of immunity for husbands raping their wives, criminalizing wife assault, amendments to the Indian Act, human rights statutes to prohibit sexual harassment and discrimination based on pregnancy and sexual orientation, the protection of therapeutic and confidential files of sexual assault survivors and the impact the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act has on the women, which is being studied by the minister.

It is important for us to understand, however, as that important report said, that we have way more to do in terms of the real poverty among women in general and in vulnerable groups of women in particular. It is also because of the double or triple discrimination of certain groups of women, particularly women of colour and aboriginal women, that we know we must continue to work hard.

We are looking at legal aid. We are looking at the idea of working with aboriginal women to find solutions to things affecting them. We are looking at working with immigrant women so they can be included in the solutions to problems, which they understand best, in their neighbourhoods. We are also looking at women's non-standard jobs, coherent and consistent measures dealing with human rights over mechanisms of partnership, affordable child care that we have heard so much about this afternoon in terms of how there cannot be equality until women have real choice as to whether they actually go to work, go back to school and know that their children have quality child care.

This is so sad when we think of the excellent report that was done by the standing committee. This is again about a government that refuses to listen to Parliament and refuses to listen to the work of committees. When we think of the 10 important recommendations in the report, as cited in the motion today, we have so much farther to go.

It is time for the women of Canada to be reminded of the progress we have made and to be reminded that if people deny that there needs to be this kind of work in terms of real equality, if people refuse to use the word equality, then they cannot move forward.

The cuts in funding to the Status of Women Canada saddens me but the unbelievable reality that certain groups in certain Conservative ridings have been quietly approached to find out if they need money for their shelter because they happen to be in a Conservative riding is also saddening. The department should be tackling this problem and assigning funds in a peer based and evidence based way with women and community groups to determine where the programs should go.

This cannot be a political football. It must be evidence based. We have tremendous experience in Status of Women Canada for the kind of evidence and programs that it has funded up until now. This is a terrible disgrace to our country internationally and we should be moving forward, not back.

• (1730)

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know the member is very dedicated in many respects to women's issues.

I was interested in many aspects of her speech because the member opposite and her colleagues had 13 years, more than a decade, to do everything she talked about as she stood in the House today. In that time, the funding for programming was cut, not once, not twice but three times.

Today we are talking about a small amount to be put in to be conciliatory and support the kinds of positive things that are happening for women all over the country.

Again today the member mentioned day care.

Clearly, actions speak louder than words and our government has taken action to ensure that programs are provided for women. I am sure all members on all sides of the House want this to happen.

Going back to the day care, is the member against families receiving \$100 per child for children under six years of age? Do you not think that parents now have the choice to use that money any way they want?

• (1735)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): I would just remind the hon. member to ask questions through the Chair, not directly to other members.

The hon. member for St. Paul's.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: Mr. Speaker, first, we are extraordinarily proud of the way that we were able to move the agenda steadily forward, too slow for a lot of us, but still steadily moving forward every day in spite of the cuts the previous Conservative government made to the women's programs in 1989.

I distinctly remember meeting in the office of the member for Vancouver South where all the women's groups were able to fight for the substantial increase that happened in the year 2000.

On the question of the \$100, or whatever really ends up in people's pockets, which could be a lot less than that as they fill out their taxes this spring, it is a family allowance. We know that all the experts feel that it is not the best way to give a family allowance. Everybody feels that the national child benefit was the best way to get money to families.

One cannot imagine how offended I feel when I hear this being called a universal child care plan. This is the most ridiculous misnaming of a family allowance. There is no choice in child care when there are no spaces. When we go across this country and realize the lack of spaces here in Ottawa and across the country, the fact that those—

Mr. Dave Batters: For 13 years you created no spaces.

Routine Proceedings

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: Could we have that heckle on the record. This is again the kind of absolute untruth that the other side is doing.

In 13 years, we created lots of child care spaces—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): Order, please. Members have lots of opportunity during questions and comments to ask the hon. member for St. Paul's questions or make comments. I would invite hon. members to do that during the questions and comments period and not while another member is speaking. We will try to finish off the rest of the debate with a little decorum.

The hon. member for Vancouver Centre on a question.

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for all the work she has done over the years to improve women's equality in this country. She has been a very strong supporter of this issue.

I think the member for Kildonan—St. Paul asked a question about the tax benefit for children. Maybe the hon. member can refresh my memory. I think it was a Liberal government that brought in about \$2,200 per child into something called the child tax benefit.

I also would like the hon. member to refresh my memory about what the child care spaces is about. Is it about babysitting or is it about looking at early learning and early childhood development?

If I recall, when I had three small children, if I wanted to go to a movie even in those days, and that was a long time ago, 30 bucks would not cover a babysitter for the night. When we take \$100 and we pay the taxes on it and all we get is 60 bucks, I do not know what—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): There is only a short period of time left for the hon. member for St. Paul's. I am going to have to cut off the hon. member for Vancouver Centre.

Order, please. The hon. member for St. Paul's.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: Mr. Speaker, in my mind reading, I think the member was going to ask me why achieving social justice was taken off the page. I do not know if the members opposite can spell it, let alone understand what it is.

In terms of social justice, as a family physician, when I delivered a baby, sometimes I was delivering it into a family that had everything, like the people across the way. Sometimes I was delivering a baby to a mom who was all on her own and who was going to need a lot of help from our community.

I am very concerned that the members opposite do not understand this. To put our community action programs—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Nanaimo—Cowichan.

I will ask for a bit of order as we enter into the last hour or so of debate.

• (1740)

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Victoria.

I start by thanking the member for London—Fanshawe for bringing this very important motion before the House. However, it is with some sadness that I am speaking about this motion.

I was part of the membership on the very first parliamentary Standing Committee on the Status of Women in 2004. During that period of time, we heard from women from coast to coast to coast on a variety of issues, including core funding for women's programs. They told us they were tired of being studied, they were tired of coming before Parliament cap in hand, asking for core funding for their organizations. Cutting core funding does not lie at the feet of the new Conservative government. The Conservative government is continuing on with the program that was started by the Liberals. In 2004 women were asking the then Liberal government to reverse its agenda on cutting core funding for women's programs.

In 2004-05 we also heard from women's organizations about things like the convention to eliminate discrimination against women. We heard about the government of the day being cited for its failure to support legal aid programs for women, for its failure to support aboriginal women in terms of access to a variety of programs and services and for its failure to provide adequate housing for women.

It is with sadness that I see this motion before us because it could have been dealt with in the previous Parliament. It asks for an increase in funding by 25% to the women's program at Status of Women Canada. It asks for a mix of core funding and project funding. The recommendations also talked about the position of Status of Women Canada as a leader in the application of the code of good practise on funding. They also state that Status of Women Canada should act now to enter into funding agreements for a minimum of three years. Why is this important for women's organizations?

There are a number of women's organizations in my riding, but two come prominently to mind. One is Women Against Violence Against Women, which is located in the Cowichan Valley, and the other is Women's Resource Centre in Nanaimo. Both of these organizations have to spend a significant amount of their time looking for funding. The executive directors and board members spend a lot of time fundraising and going to private donors. In the meantime, they are unable to fulfill their organization's mandate even though they attempt to do a good job. Time and energy should be put into delivering their mandates rather than constantly looking for funds. This also causes a great deal of instability within these organizations. The staff is committed to the issues facing women both in the community of Nanaimo—Cowichan and across this country. These women are often underpaid and work far more hours than is reasonable to get the job done.

We would really improve the lot of women in their communities if women's organizations had core stable funding to provide the necessary services.

Routine Proceedings

Who sits at the table and who gets to make a decision is important. All parliamentarians are hard-working individuals, but women are not represented here in the numbers they should be. I looked at some research put forward in November 2006 by the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women. It indicated that women in Canada made up 50.4% of the population, but only 20.8% of the seats in the House of Commons. According to the United Nations, Canada ranks 30th in the world in terms of women representation in Parliament. We fall behind Sweden, Norway, Rwanda, Trinidad and Tobago, among other countries. The current governing party in the House of Commons fielded the fewest women candidates in the general election of 2006, with only 10% of its candidates being women.

● (1745)

These numbers have not budged in quite some time. We have been stuck around the 20% range for at least 10 years. One of the ways we can encourage women's participation in a parliamentary process is to ensure there is funding at the local level.

Before I was elected, I was pleased to participate in a project sponsored by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. It looked at barriers to women in municipal politics. That was just not elected women, but in the whole process. Part of the report stated that there were many systemic barriers to women's participation, one barrier being around education and awareness. This is a role that women's organizations can play. One of the vital functions to which core funding can contribute is in education and awareness so women know what a political process looks like, so they understand how to get involved in that process and what it means to run for a variety of elected positions, school board, municipal and federal.

We would make far better decisions and more balanced decisions in the House if 50% of the representation in the House were women.

I heard some talk about how much women have achieved. Certainly they have achieved much over the last 25 or 30 years, but there is a significant gap. People talked about the fact that women were attending post-secondary institutions in increasing numbers and becoming professionally accredited in a number of areas. However, the economic reality is this, and I quote from the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women, the CRIAW Fact Sheet report. It states:

At every level of education, women in Canada earn less on average than men. For example, in 2003, women who are high school graduates earned 71.0% of what male high school graduates earned for full-time, full-year work.

The report goes on further about the ratios and states that in terms of the ratio of male to female earned income, the wage gap, Canada ranks 38th in the world behind countries like Cambodia, Kenya and the Czech Republic among others.

I spoke earlier about programs like employment insurance. Women have lost ground under programs like employment insurance. Women have been unable to qualify, for example, for maternity and paternity the way they used to under the old system.

On economic equality, in May 2004 the federal task force on pay equity released its comprehensive report which addressed the criticisms of current pay equity legislation. In the current context, on September 18, 2006, the federal government responded no, to the

recommendations of a multi-year federal task force on pay equity as part of its response to the all party House of Commons standing committee.

On September 18, 2006, it responded no to the EI maternity-parental leave recommendations of the all party House of Commons standing committee.

We can start to see this theme emerge. We are undermining women's equality in this country. The current government took all mention of equality out of the terms and conditions of women's programs and changed the rules so women's organizations could no longer use federal funds to advocate for women's equality, including pressing for changes that will recognize the value and contribution women make in the paid workplace and in the home.

According to the 1984 Royal Commission on Equality in Employment, child care is the ramp that provides equal access to the workforce for mothers. Twenty-two years later that ramp has yet to be built.

I know a number of other members have talked about child care, so I will not talk about it for the moment, but I want to talk about legal aid. I come from British Columbia where legal aid has been slashed by the provincial government, but it was also partly in response to what has happened at the federal government level.

The CRIAW Fact Sheet talks about the fact that not everyone has equal access to the law. In the early 1990s the federal government capped its contributions to the provinces for legal aid and subsequently cut it significantly in the mid-1990s. This filtered down to the provinces, with cutbacks and restrictions about who would use legal aid and for what.

We are now faced with a situation where women do not have income equality. They do not have adequate access to child care, to housing and to legal aid.

We have this continuing step back from a women's equality agenda. Here we are in 2007. It is time for women to be able to take their rightful place at all levels in our country. They should have equal access in the paid workforce and in the elected processes.

I urge members of the House to support the motion on core funding. This will get to the very heart of allowing women to speak up and advocate for what should be rightfully theirs.

● (1750)

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, may I remind the hon. members of their repeated opposition to our men and women serving in Afghanistan. I add that these men and women are serving to free the Afghan people, and in particular Afghan women, from their oppressive Taliban rulers. Thanks to our brave men and women soldiers over there, over seven million Afghan children, a third of whom are girls, are enrolled in school this year, a figure which was inconceivable a year ago.

Routine Proceedings

We talk about advocating for women's rights. The member just said that it is time for women to take their place in society. Why do the NDP members speak against the Afghan mission? This has done more for women and children than anything that has ever happened in that country before.

These programs would not be possible were it not for our brave soldiers stationed in Afghanistan. We need to ensure that programs like this for women's equality are maintained.

I do not understand why the members opposite can blindly oppose these programs, all of which actively encourage women of all ages to break the shackles of their oppressive regime and embrace freedom, democracy and the rule of law.

Instead, they continue to badger Canada's new government about not doing enough for women. We have heard it this afternoon. Those members have stood up and said that the government is not doing enough for women. The opposition members want to have their cake and eat it too. Do they support women or do they not?

Ms. Jean Crowder: Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to hear the member talk about support for the troops, when today in the House in question period we heard that widows and widowers of forces members who have been serving in Afghanistan are having to fight concerning their mortgage insurance.

If we want to talk about support for our troops, then let us get realistic. We have to not only support the troops when they are over in Afghanistan, and the member knows very well that the NDP has absolutely supported our troops, but we also have to support the troops when they come home. That is fundamental.

The NDP does not want to see the troops when they are already in pain and suffering having to come back to deal with a bureaucratic nightmare at the very time when they need help and support.

If the Conservative government really wanted to support the troops, it would make sure that it eliminated that kind of bungling that interferes with people being able to feel some comfort in their own homes.

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to my colleague opposite and the question that was asked of her. I wonder if she would comment on the following.

The Conservatives claim they are supporting women, but at the same time they are removing equality and advocacy from the functions of Status of Women Canada which helped support women. This is especially true when the Status of Women has worked for women who needed advocacy for the past 25 years. It has led to women really finding their place in society.

How can eliminating money from the vulnerable, money from Status of Women Canada, money from literacy programs and money from volunteer recognition help support women?

If we are talking about supporting Afghan women, I would like to put things into perspective. There are only four provinces out of the 24 provinces in Afghanistan that face problems. Who are we really trying to help? Let us help women here first.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Mr. Speaker, there were two parts to the member's question. If we want to talk about supporting women

around the world, what we should do is ask the government to honour its commitment of 0.7% of the GDP for international aid. That would be a really good first step.

In terms of advocacy, that is a vital role that women's organizations can play. It is also an essential role.

The court challenges program was cancelled. This is one more element where women have to struggle to have their voices heard.

Advocacy has been an essential role that women's organizations have played from coast to coast to coast in bringing to the table issues such as child care, legal aid and lack of access to legal aid. In issues such as adequate housing and employment equity those advocacy roles are essential.

We want to make sure when we develop policies and legislation that we understand the impacts that these policies and legislation can have on women. Often there are inadvertent impacts.

● (1755)

Ms. Denise Savoie (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from London—Fanshawe for bringing these recommendations back to the House. This resonates especially strongly for me as I hear of the child care resources and referrals centre being cut and child care costs being passed on by the provincial governments because of the cancellation of the federal-provincial agreements.

Last year when these cuts were announced, we should have been celebrating Canada's ratification of the UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women. Instead, we mourned the impact of the Conservative government's decisions regarding pay equity, regarding the cuts to the court challenges program, the cuts to child care, the cuts to Status of Women Canada, the cuts to literacy and so many other social issues, this, despite the UN's concern with Canada's compliance in these very areas.

In 2003 the UN made a number of recommendations that we should reassess the gender impact of anti-poverty measures and increase the effort to combat poverty among women; increase the funding for women's crisis centres and shelters; take additional measures to increase the representation of women in political and public life; expand affordable child care facilities—and we know what has happened to that; in fact they are diminishing—and accelerate the effort to eliminate discrimination against aboriginal women.

So much for modernizing and refocusing programs for women. All this talk on the Conservative side of the House about modernizing Status of Women Canada or modernizing women's programs brings to mind the image of the elephant in the chicken coop stomping around and shouting, "Each man for himself", as he tramples on the chickens. All this talk of gender neutrality, gender neutral programs is a little far-fetched. The reality is the Conservatives have cut the programs.

I would like to speak specifically on the Conservatives' elimination of the mandate for advocacy. What does that mean exactly? The word "equality" was also removed from the funding mandate.

Routine Proceedings

We know from the UN report there are many areas where women are still in a position of inequality. Child care has been mentioned often. We could talk about housing for single parent women who have unequal access. We could talk about political representation. Our party happens to have 41% women in our caucus. The Conservative government has 10.8%, and there is no indication of any program to improve that. There is a lot of work to be done around advocacy.

Last weekend I happened to be with young people at a conference to celebrate International Development Week. The focus was on promoting gender equity. One young woman spoke about a program that she was involved in, spearheading and promoting in Canada to have young women in Malawi become educated and escape the fate of poverty. It made me see the need to stress and highlight the importance that advocacy has had on their lives.

Even though Canada is certainly not Malawi, there are still huge inequities in Canada. Some of them have been pointed out, especially with respect to aboriginal women. In this House as we look at the sea of suits and ties, we can see that we have not by any means reached any level of equity.

We know that the largest number of single families are headed by women. We know that they are disproportionately poorer.

● (1800)

Status of Women Canada played a very key role in breaking down those obstacles and barriers, in working toward a more inclusive society by promoting gender equity and promoting the full participation of women in the economic, social, cultural and political life. This has been made more difficult by the Conservatives' decision to make cuts to Status of Women Canada.

Fortunately the young women who are following in our footsteps will not accept the kind of inequality the Conservatives would like to reserve for women.

I would like to read some statements made by a couple of young women at the VIDEA workshop and conference last week. One woman said, "We wish to achieve gender equity, including equal distribution of power and influence so women's contributions can be manifested worldwide. This can be achieved through education and understanding and politics". Another woman said, "I dare to dream of a world building happy, healthy and hopeful communities through equal opportunities for all, listening to all voices, empowerment of all, encouragement and recognition of the individual and collective initiatives".

Those are the words of the next generation. Those women will continue to oppose and speak against the kind of inequalities the Conservatives seem to want to perpetuate through their meanspirited cuts.

I would also like to come back to the word "equality" that was removed from the funding mandate, aboriginal women living in poverty, women generally working in non-standard jobs, the lack of child care spaces that would have allowed many single women struggling to make ends meet to access jobs.

I heard last week that in one case the fee of \$900 for one child care space for a toddler was going to increase by at least \$50 per month

per child. Imagine paying that on a very modest salary. Imagine trying to make ends meet and really meet the needs of one's child. This is simply not realistic.

The Conservative facade of choice has simply been unmasked in British Columbia. Parents and child care providers have been meeting at town halls. They will meet again tomorrow in a rally to protest the lack of opportunity that the Conservative decision has led them to, the situation that women are now facing because of it.

Women will not accept that decision. They will continue to speak out against it, as we should continue to speak out against the cuts to Status of Women Canada. Without the support and the strong actions of organizations that are willing to speak out for the marginalized, for those who are struggling, it would have been very difficult to make the progress that we have made so far. It is because of women who have spoken out publicly that we have made progress. We are now in a situation where the government has taken a step backward. This must stop.

I ask all members to support these recommendations.

● (1805)

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to quickly get on the record a view from the north, because it is quite different. There are really four points that northern women emphasize to me.

First of all, they want equality back in the mandate, for the reasons that have been well outlined today.

The second point is that they need the independent research fund put back, because it really has been used. They have examples of how it has advanced women's place in Yukon, in the north.

They want advocacy back as an eligible activity, and if not, to at least have the non-profits having non-charitable status allowed to do advocacy.

The last point and the most important one, which I want to ask the member about, is related to the north being different.

The north is a very different situation. Quite often the women are isolated. The resources are very scarce. We do not have other programs that women can use to fund their offices or their workers. There is more violence against women. There are more sexual assaults. There are more homicides. There is more use of shelters. The climate is harsher. Members can imagine what it is like when a woman has a \$900 oil bill and limited revenue. The cost of living is much higher. It is a very difficult situation, even more difficult than what has been mentioned across the country.

Government Orders

I would just like to ask the member if she would support me in my assertion and request that we have a northern office for the status of women, specifically in one of the three territories, so that they can have good access to and a common understanding of the problems and challenges for women across the north. They are sometimes the same but indeed are sometimes intensified and even more challenging for them.

Ms. Denise Savoie: Mr. Speaker, I would certainly agree with the member. Having spent some time up north, I am familiar with some of the issues. I agree that the conditions he describes exacerbate the situation that women find themselves in.

I became particularly aware of that problem when the women's centres were closed in northern British Columbia, so I would certainly agree with the situation that he describes and support his suggestion.

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in Afghanistan women now are going to school and are opening businesses. For years women were oppressed and were not able to do that. Today in this House we have heard so many comments about equality for women, and the NDP members have stood up and said we need to bring an equal voice to women and have equality for women, yet they vote against and stand against the mission in Afghanistan. I am wondering how this squares: wanting equality for women yet not supporting our mission in Afghanistan. Because of the soldiers, women now are able to go to school and to start businesses. They are able to have a life.

Would the member please explain to me why this double standard is here in the House this afternoon?

Ms. Denise Savoie: Mr. Speaker, I would be pleased to explain it once again to the member. I guess she did not understand the first answer she received from my colleague.

Certainly there is strong support on this side of the House for helping Afghanistan rebuild its civil society. Where there have been differences of opinion is in the combat mission and in ferreting out the Taliban up north without having any kind of exit plan or strategy.

I would also suggest that if the Conservatives really are supportive of our forces, they should consider supporting our veterans first motion, which is proposing to extend the veterans independence program, helping widows or widowers after their—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings at this time and put forthwith the question on the motion now before the House.

The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): Accordingly, the vote stands deferred until tomorrow at the end of government orders.

* * *

● (1810)

[*Translation*]

PETITIONS

WILBERT COFFIN

Mr. Raynald Blais (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to rise again to present the fifth instalment of a petition signed by the people in my constituency about Wilbert Coffin.

There are more than 1,300 names on this petition. These people are asking the government to shed light on the Coffin case. Since there has been a unanimous vote here in the House of Commons on this issue, I think that this petition can be added to everything that has been said and written to date about this case. More than 1,300 people have added their names to the 2,500 others who have called for justice for Wilbert Coffin.

* * *

[*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 Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

CANADA ELECTIONS ACT

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC) moved that Bill C-31, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act and the Public Service Employment Act, be read the third time and passed.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak in favour of Bill C-31. I strongly encourage all hon. members to join me in passing this bill by the House in order that it may come into effect as soon as possible after it is passed by the Senate.

Government Orders

[*English*]

I would hope that senators would not unduly delay passage of this bill, unlike two other bills, Bill S-4 to limit Senate terms, and Bill C-16 to establish fixed dates for elections, both of which have already passed in this House.

I would note that it has now been 258 days since the bill to limit Senate terms to eight years was introduced, 258 days that it has gone without a second reading vote. Every single day it comes up in the Senate, the Liberal-dominated Senate obstructs it by delaying it and voting for adjournment.

An hon. member: How many words is it?

Hon. Peter Van Loan: It is only 66 words long, Mr. Speaker, that is all, but the Liberal-dominated Senate continues to delay and obstruct something that their own leader claims to support. Despite the fact that the leader of the Liberal Party, the hon. member for Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, advocates fixed terms for senators, his Liberal colleagues in the other place just will not listen to him. He just cannot get it done.

I hope this bill will not meet the same fate, because it of course also enjoys the support of the opposition here in the House of Commons. I hope opposition members will be able to persuade their Senate colleagues to support it as well.

Before I turn to the benefits of this bill, I do want to express my thanks and gratitude to the member for Niagara Falls, the Minister of Justice. It is because of his work as the former government House leader and minister for democratic reform that we now are in a position to advance this very important bill.

On January 4, the Prime Minister reaffirmed our government's commitment to make our country's institutions more democratic and more accountable. Bill C-31 is just one of the government's very robust democratic reform agenda items. It is an agenda based on bringing accountability and integrity to the institutions and processes of government.

We have successfully passed the federal Accountability Act. Oddly, it was another bill that was held up for almost a year in the process, but we finally got it through. That bill brought about important changes to political financing to eliminate big money from our electoral system.

As I indicated, we have passed Bill C-16 on fixed election dates through the House of Commons. Never again will the government of the day be able to play around with the date of an election for its own crass political motives.

We also have introduced Bill S-4 to limit senator's terms to eight years. It is a concept endorsed by the Leader of the Opposition. We would like to see it become law. We would even like to debate it in this House. That has not happened yet, but we would like it to come out of the Senate so we can consider it.

I fully encourage the Leader of the Opposition to stand up and use the full force of his leadership. I know how strong that full force of leadership has been. As is evident from indications in the past few weeks, it is not that strong, but I would encourage him to muster all

the strength he has to get it through and out of the Senate and to tell his colleagues to follow his lead. We would be happy to deal with it.

We of course have also introduced Bill C-43, which is a bill to consult Canadians on who they would like to see representing them in the Senate. Right now, of course, terms can be as long as 45 years, and those people can be appointed by the Prime Minister without any consultation. They have been in the past, which is perhaps why we have a Liberal-dominated Senate that will not allow the will of the House of Commons and Canadians to prevail.

We would like to have an opportunity to ask Canadians who they would like representing them in the Senate. That is another one of our objectives. That of course would reform our system and Parliament in a more democratic and more accountable way. Everyone knows that our parliamentary institutions are the foundation of our democracy and, as such, they must be democratic. We have a responsibility to ensure they continue to operate well for the benefit of Canadians.

With this in mind, as the current Minister for Democratic Reform I feel privileged to rise to speak on this bill today.

Bill C-31 makes a number of operational improvements to the electoral process and the Canada Elections Act. It is aimed at improving the integrity of our elections. It implements almost all of the recommendations of the 13th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, a report which was agreed to unanimously by committee members from all parties. The same committee reported the bill with some amendments to fine-tune it on December 13.

In short, Bill C-31 is about simple solutions that will yield tangible improvements to the integrity of our electoral system.

Most of these amendments to the Elections Act were originally recommended by the Chief Electoral Officer, who has had on the ground experience in administering elections. All of these legislative changes were endorsed by the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, comprised of members of Parliament with real on the ground experience as candidates. A number of the changes may seem small, but collectively they will lead to real results that will improve the integrity of our system.

First, I want to speak about improvements to the national register and list of electors. We have proposed, for instance, amendments that will improve the accuracy of the national register of electors and, by implication, the lists of electors used by each of us during electoral campaigns.

● (1815)

As most will recall, the national register replaced the door-to-door enumeration that used to occur up to 1997. It is from this register that permanent voters' lists, as some of us call it, are generated.

We all know the importance of these lists for engaging our constituents in a campaign and for encouraging them to vote. We have all experienced the challenges that have been faced by Elections Canada in maintaining a database of such a large size in a country growing so rapidly where mobility is so high.

Government Orders

Over the years, Elections Canada has taken strides to improve the quality of the register, but the Chief Electoral Officer has requested more tools to allow for greater improvements and efficiencies. Bill C-31 gives him those tools. For example, we have all seen the box on the front page of the income tax return that allows Canadians to consent to have their name, address and date of birth shared with Elections Canada for inclusion in the register.

Unfortunately, the Chief Electoral Officer has found that a lot of non-citizens who are not entitled to vote are checking the box and making the information less reliable.

Bill C-31 provides the authority to change the question on the income tax form and make it clear that it only applies to Canadian citizens and only they should check it off. This will improve the reliability of the information received, enhance the accuracy of the register and, in turn, improve the quality of the voters' lists. It is a simple change. It will produce real results by ensuring that only eligible voters will have their names placed on the voters' list.

Similarly, Bill C-31 allows income tax returns to be used to inform Elections Canada of deceased electors, so those names can be removed from the register more quickly.

In addition, the bill updates statutory authorities to allow returning officers to update the register and the list of electors, to clarify the ability of the Chief Electoral Officer to exchange information with provincial electoral authorities, and to permit the Chief Electoral Officer to use stable identifiers that will make cross-referencing of information on electors more efficient.

Each of these reforms will contribute to a better, more up-to-date national register and in so doing improve the integrity of the lists.

Another element of this bill would improve the ability to communicate with the electorate, which is of course a fundamental cornerstone of our democratic system. These reforms are designed to allow candidates, parties, election officials and the electorate all to engage in a dialogue. That is what makes democracy work.

● (1820)

[*Translation*]

Election officials, particularly returning officers, will have access to apartment buildings and gated residential communities to carry out their functions.

It will therefore be easier for them to conduct a targeted revision of the list of electors by going to electors in areas of high mobility and low registration.

It will also be easier for candidates to meet electors because they will have better access to gated communities and areas open to the public, such as malls, to campaign.

Taken together, these reforms will help the electorate become better informed and enable voters to become more familiar with local representatives and the political process.

[*English*]

A third set of reforms in this bill would improve the accessibility of voting by those who are entitled to vote. For instance, many Canadians are using advance polls to cast their votes rather than

waiting until polling day. That is critically important if we are to see the turnout increase or at least reverse the decline in turnout that has been happening until recently.

Bill C-31 will allow greater flexibility to establish more advance polls when circumstances warrant. This is of particular benefit for large ridings and remote areas, where advance polling districts can be very large and hard to access for some residents. This bill will go a long way to improve access for voters and will lead to increased voter turnout across this country.

One of the things that has saddened many of us who care a great deal about democracy is that at the same time as we have seen a decline in community involvement in all kinds of activities, we have seen that decline in the voter rate. That decline in voter participation is a bad thing for our democracy. We want to see Canadians engaged in their process. We think it is important that voter turnout increase.

All of us in the House of Commons have to explore ways in which we can work to improve voter turnout. If allowing more advance polls is one way to do it, as Bill C-31 opens the door to doing, that is something that we should be doing.

I encourage all members of this House to take that step in the right direction to reversing the decline in voter turnout and encouraging more Canadians to vote, encouraging more Canadians to have a real stake in our electoral system and to participate in that way.

On another subject, one of the most significant sets of changes in this bill addresses potential voter fraud. Like all the reforms that I have discussed, these amendments protect the integrity of the electoral process. The fundamental democratic principle of our electoral process is that only those entitled to vote should vote and they must vote only once.

[*Translation*]

During meetings of the House Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, it was clear that most of the members had heard of times when this principle was violated. Every time that happens, voter confidence in the electoral system and its integrity is shaken and an eligible voter is deprived of the right to vote.

[*English*]

Bill C-31 takes action to reduce the opportunity for voting fraud through a very simple step. It amends the Elections Act requiring Canadians to show identification for voting. Rather than only stating one's name and address, which is all someone has to do right now, a voter will have to provide some kind of proof of their identity and residence before receiving a ballot.

I cannot say how many times voters have come to me and said they could not believe that they were not asked for any identification and that anybody could have voted in their place. I think most of us have probably heard stories of folks who have gone to vote and found out that somebody had already voted claiming to be them. We all hear those stories and they are alarming. This change will put an end to that.

The change applies to people who are already registered to vote and are on the list of electors. I should stress that under the current system those who are not registered to vote must already show identification to register at the polls. We are simply making that requirement a uniform requirement. Simply put, the bill requires individuals to prove who they are and that they are who they say they are before they vote.

[*Translation*]

The federal voter identification process will be modelled on similar procedures in Canada and in other countries, such as those in Quebec and a growing number of municipalities across the country. It will improve the integrity of the process and reduce opportunities for electoral fraud, which can have an impact on very close election results.

• (1825)

[*English*]

In turn, this reform will, like the other measures I have discussed, enhance the integrity of our system and the confidence of the people in that system. This is what this bill is all about, the integrity of our electoral process, which is something in which we all have a stake.

In closing, as Minister for Democratic Reform, I am excited about this bill because it provides tangible and real results for Canadians. Without a well functioning electoral machinery our democracy will not work. All hon. members will agree that the machinery must be regularly maintained, updated, renewed and modernized, and it is our duty as parliamentarians to do that work.

The progress of Bill C-31 is an ideal example of how that work should be done. The genesis of the bill was a parliamentary committee report that was agreed to by all the members of that committee, including the representatives of the New Democratic Party. The government responded with legislative action. We have worked with the other parties in fine tuning the bill after hearing from a number of witnesses in committee. It is truly a multi-partisan or non-partisan effort designed to improve the integrity from which all of us will benefit.

If our electoral system is held in a higher regard, all of us will be held in a higher regard and to the extent that confidence is lacking, all of us suffer as parliamentarians. That is why I think the spirit in which this has gone forward is a positive one and what this bill does is positive.

[*Translation*]

I hope that the House will pass this bill quickly so that it can come into force as soon as possible. I urge my colleagues on both sides of the House to join me in supporting Bill C-31.

Adjournment Proceedings

[*English*]

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member said, the electoral office brought a number of recommendations to Parliament to improve the integrity of the voting system. I support improving the integrity of the voting system. There are a number of things that will actually give voters in the north more access and I applaud those.

I want to ensure though that the member will be onside, as he said, regarding the objective to increase the numbers and ability of people to vote, remembering that there are people in Canada in different situations. There are isolated aboriginal communities, where ID, for instance, could be a problem or people in homeless situations.

I want to ensure we have his support in ensuring that the electoral office will have the resources and the direction to ensure that it gets to these people, gets them enumerated, and that governments have the resources to ensure these people have the identification that they need so that they will also have a fair chance under this legislation and more opportunity to vote.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, I do agree with my hon. friend. It is important that in areas where people are unlikely to be on the voters' list, the Chief Electoral Officer should make a particular effort to have them enumerated.

I have within my constituency a native reserve. We have the good fortune that our returning officer actually comes from that location, so that assists in ensuring that proper attention is paid there. But we want to see the same proper attention paid everywhere.

However, we also have areas of high growth, new subdivisions and new developments. Those are areas that are very often under-enumerated and underrepresented. These are young families with a great stake in the future of their country for whom their arrival in the community is new. It is very difficult to know how to vote, where to vote, and how to get involved in things. It is a particularly important part, I believe, in engaging those individuals in their communities, enhancing their stake in the community, and inviting them immediately in a proactive way to participate in elections. That is why I think it is important that returning officers do make that special effort to include them on the voters' list.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

* * *

[*English*]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it saddens me to rise today to talk about Kashechewan again. As members are aware, Kashechewan has been in the news in the past week, with descriptions of the despair many young people are feeling in the community. Their school has been closed for months.

Adjournment Proceedings

Along with the continuing worry of flood during the season's ice breakup, worry about the new location of their community, and worry over mental health issues, particularly among the young, the lack of a school creates more stress in the community.

Unfortunately, Kashechewan is not alone. In Attawapiskat, the elementary school has been closed for over a year because of a diesel fuel spill. The students are now attending at the remaining school in shifts.

In Manitoba, students from the Mosakahiken Cree Nation are waiting for a new school to be built after the old one burned to the ground in 2005.

In the Opaskwayak Cree Nation, the school is so overcrowded that it has 25% more students than it was built for.

In the Manto Sipi Cree Nation, two students had to go to Winnipeg and Thompson to attend high school. The students, Dwayne Ross and Sunshine Ross, went missing, and are still missing to this day.

If we look at the water situation, we can see that Kashechewan is not alone. We are not just talking about remote communities.

In my own community of Duncan, Cowichan tribes spend part of every year with contaminated water from their seven community wells and 33 individual wells. These residences are mere metres away from the municipal service in Duncan but cannot have reliable access to clean drinking water. It is all about infrastructure.

Those are just a few of the communities around the country that are waiting for help with their infrastructure.

This is the question I really have. Is it true that there is a shortfall in capital infrastructure money to provide basic services to first nations in this year, 2007-08, of \$293 million, and that facilities operation and management dollars are underfunded to the tune of \$82 million? That is a total of \$375 million overall that first nations do not receive to provide basic services like clean drinking water, waste water treatment, and access to schools and community recreation.

Will the Conservative government commit to meeting this funding gap in the upcoming budget?

• (1830)

Mr. Steven Fletcher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fact is the government has invested hundreds of millions of dollars over and above what had previously been invested by the previous government.

The question deals with Kashechewan and the challenges the people face there, so I will focus my remarks on that particular situation.

I think all members of the House will agree that last year the people of Kashechewan faced a very difficult and serious set of problems. We said at the time, and we will repeat, the situation that existed before the government took office was completely unacceptable, and we have worked hard to ensure it does not happen again.

I am happy to report that one year later there has been significant improvements in the community, but we know the work is far from complete. That is why our government continues to work with the leadership of Kashechewan and the tribal council to find durable, long term solutions to the challenges faced by the people of Kashechewan.

We recognize that the problems faced by the community are both immediate and long term. We are taking action on both fronts. We have already made progress in many key areas. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada continues to work with first nations to ensure that the current community is sustainable in the short and medium term. Work has been done to repair housing and other key infrastructure in place.

As of August last year, all residents had returned to the community. I am happy to report that the problems with the community's drinking water have been alleviated as well. The drinking water advisory was lifted on June 26 last year. The water produced by the community's water treatment plant is safe and meeting provincial standards. Also the latest phase of automation of the water treatment plant is expected to be completed in the near future.

To date, the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development has invested approximately \$12.2 million in housing in Kashechewan and that includes \$8.5 million to the tribal council for renovations to 60 homes and another \$4 million for 35 mobile homes to be set up in the community as temporary accommodation. These can also be used as permanent, longer term housing if needed.

Most of the 42 homes damaged by the recent flooding have also been repaired and renovations to another 30 homes are almost complete.

The government is working with partner agencies on measures to make every reasonable attempt to prevent flooding and reduce the impact on the community if flooding does occur in the spring.

A working group made up of representatives from several federal and provincial departments and ministries, including Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Health Canada, Emergency Management Ontario and the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources have formed a plan to prepare for possible flooding in the James Bay area first nations this spring.

In terms of other infrastructure to meet the needs of the community, a new jail and police detachment building have been in operation since September 2006. As well, an assessment of elementary schools has been completed, while both elementary and high school students are accommodated at the high school. We have agreed to cover the costs of repairs to the elementary school and to address the health and safety concerns. As of yet, we have not received a response from the education authority or the first nation.

Progress has been made in resolving—

• (1835)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): Order, please. The hon. member for Nanaimo—Cowichan.

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I really did not get an answer to my question.

We are talking about Kashechewan as an example of serious problems with infrastructure and that is repeated in communities across the nation, and I mentioned a few. Part of it is schools have burned down, or they have been contaminated by fuel spills or water. In my own community Cowichan tribes people adjacent to a city cannot get funding for adequate infrastructure for water and sewer. What we have seen over a number of years has been a 2% cap on funding, which has perpetuated a serious infrastructure deficit.

Many of these communities across the country have not had sufficient infrastructure to begin with. We have heard horror stories from communities where there is a water plant in place, but there are no water lines to hook up the homes. We have certainly seen it in Kashechewan.

Again, will the 2% cap be lifted and appropriate funding be put in—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health.

Mr. Steven Fletcher: Mr. Speaker, I think the member would agree that the condition in which the previous government left the

Adjournment Proceedings

first nations across the country was deplorable and that work needed to be done.

I am happy to assure the member that the government is doing everything possible to ensure that the citizens in all first nations communities can exist in a safe and friendly environment.

I want to make it clear that INAC officials are reviewing the Alan Pope report of November 8, 2006, where he makes a number of recommendations on how to improve the situation on Kashechewan. We are looking at—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): Order, please. Unfortunately, we have run out of time for the adjournment proceedings today.

The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24.

(The House adjourned at 6:39 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Monday, February 12, 2007

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Brain Tumour Surveillance

Motion	6663
Mr. Temelkovski	6663
Ms. Brunelle	6664
Mr. Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	6665
Mr. Dykstra	6666
Mr. Fast	6668
Mr. Norlock	6669
Mr. Casey	6671
Division on motion deferred	6672

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Anti-terrorism Act

Motion	6672
Ms. Folco	6672
Mr. Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	6674
Mr. Wrzesnewskyj	6674
Mr. Batters	6674
Mr. Bagnell	6674
Mr. Schellenberger	6675
Mr. Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	6675
Mr. Silva	6677
Mr. Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)	6678
Mr. Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)	6678
Mr. Batters	6679
Mr. Cullen (Etobicoke North)	6679
Mr. Batters	6681
Mr. Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)	6682
Mr. Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)	6682
Mr. MacKenzie	6683
Mr. Thibault (West Nova)	6684
Mr. Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)	6684
Mr. Wrzesnewskyj	6685
Mr. Breitkreuz	6685
Ms. Savoie	6685
Mr. Norlock	6686
Mr. Lee	6687

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games

Mr. Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	6687
--	------

Health

Ms. Fry	6687
---------------	------

Manufacturing Industry

Mr. André	6687
-----------------	------

Child Care

Ms. Savoie	6688
------------------	------

Young Leaders in Rural Canada Awards

Mr. Anderson	6688
--------------------	------

Veterans

Ms. Guarnieri	6688
---------------------	------

Senate Tenure Legislation

Mr. Miller	6688
------------------	------

48th Annual Quebec City International Peeewe Hockey Tournament

Mr. Malo	6688
----------------	------

The Environment

Mr. Lake	6689
----------------	------

Kyoto Protocol Implementation Act

Mr. Rodriguez	6689
---------------------	------

Anti-terrorism Act

Mr. Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	6689
-----------------------------------	------

Special Olympics New Brunswick Winter Games

Mr. Godin	6689
-----------------	------

Aboriginal Affairs

Mr. Merasty	6690
-------------------	------

Child Soldiers

Ms. Deschamps	6690
---------------------	------

Forest Industry

Mr. St. Denis	6690
---------------------	------

ORAL QUESTIONS

Judicial Appointments

Mr. Dion	6690
Mr. Van Loan	6690
Mr. Dion	6690
Mr. Van Loan	6691
Mr. Dion	6691
Mr. Van Loan	6691
Mr. Ignatieff	6691
Mr. Nicholson	6691
Mr. Ignatieff	6691
Mr. Nicholson	6691
Mr. Duceppe	6691
Mr. Van Loan	6691
Mr. Duceppe	6691
Mr. Van Loan	6692
Mr. Ménard (Hochelaga)	6692
Mr. Nicholson	6692
Mr. Ménard (Hochelaga)	6692
Mr. Nicholson	6692

Canadian Forces

Mr. Layton	6692
Mr. Van Loan	6692
Mr. Layton	6692
Mr. Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)	6692

Judicial Appointments

Mrs. Jennings	6693
---------------------	------

Mrs. Smith	6708
Mrs. Mathysen	6709
Mr. Stanton	6709
Ms. Deschamps	6710
Mrs. Smith	6712
Ms. Minna	6712
Mr. Lévesque	6712
Mr. Stanton	6713
Ms. Fry	6714
Mrs. Mathysen	6714
Mr. Lunney	6715
Ms. Minna	6715
Ms. Fry	6715
Mrs. Smith	6717
Ms. Crowder	6717
Ms. Bennett	6718
Mrs. Smith	6719
Ms. Fry	6720
Ms. Crowder	6720
Mrs. Smith	6721
Ms. Ratansi	6722
Ms. Savoie	6722

Mr. Bagnell	6723
Mrs. Smith	6724
Division on motion deferred	6724

Petitions

Wilbert Coffin

Mr. Blais	6724
-----------------	------

Questions on the Order Paper

Mr. Lukiwski	6724
--------------------	------

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Canada Elections Act

Mr. Van Loan	6724
Bill C-31. Third reading	6724
Mr. Bagnell	6727

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

Aboriginal Affairs

Ms. Crowder	6727
Mr. Fletcher	6728
Ms. Crowder	6728

MAIL  POSTE

Canada Post Corporation / Société canadienne des postes

Postage paid

Port payé

Lettermail

Poste-lettre

**1782711
Ottawa**

If undelivered, return COVER ONLY to:
Publishing and Depository Services
Public Works and Government Services Canada
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0S5

*En cas de non-livraison,
retourner cette COUVERTURE SEULEMENT à :*
Les Éditions et Services de dépôt
Travaux publics et Services gouvernementaux Canada
Ottawa (Ontario) K1A 0S5

Published under the authority of the Speaker of the House of Commons

Publié en conformité de l'autorité du Président de la Chambre des communes

**Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the following address:
Aussi disponible sur le site Web du Parlement du Canada à l'adresse suivante :**
<http://www.parl.gc.ca>

The Speaker of the House hereby grants permission to reproduce this document, in whole or in part, for use in schools and for other purposes such as private study, research, criticism, review or newspaper summary. Any commercial or other use or reproduction of this publication requires the express prior written authorization of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

**Additional copies may be obtained from Publishing and Depository Services
Public Works and Government Services Canada
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0S5
Telephone: (613) 941-5995 or 1-800-635-7943
Fax: (613) 954-5779 or 1-800-565-7757
publications@pwgsc.gc.ca
<http://publications.gc.ca>**

Le Président de la Chambre des communes accorde, par la présente, l'autorisation de reproduire la totalité ou une partie de ce document à des fins éducatives et à des fins d'étude privée, de recherche, de critique, de compte rendu ou en vue d'en préparer un résumé de journal. Toute reproduction de ce document à des fins commerciales ou autres nécessite l'obtention au préalable d'une autorisation écrite du Président.

**On peut obtenir des copies supplémentaires ou la version française de cette publication en écrivant à : Les Éditions et Services de dépôt
Travaux publics et Services gouvernementaux Canada
Ottawa (Ontario) K1A 0S5
Téléphone : (613) 941-5995 ou 1-800-635-7943
Télécopieur : (613) 954-5779 ou 1-800-565-7757
publications@tpsgc.gc.ca
<http://publications.gc.ca>**