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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Monday, January 28, 2002

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, January 28, 2002

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

•(1100)
[English]

VACANCIES

SAINT BONIFACE, WINDSOR WEST, SAINT-LÉONARD—SAINT MICHEL,
BONAVISTA—TRINITY—CONCEPTION

The Speaker: It is my duty to inform the House that vacancies have occurred in the representation: namely, Mr. Ronald Duhamel, member for the electoral district of Saint Boniface, by resignation, effective January 14, 2002; Mr. Herb Gray, member for the electoral district of Windsor West, by resignation, effective January 14, 2002; Mr. Alfonso Gagliano, member for the electoral district of Saint-Léonard—Saint Michel, by resignation, effective January 14, 2002; Mr. Brian Tobin, member for the electoral district of Bonavista—Trinity—Conception, by resignation, effective January 25, 2002.

Pursuant to subsection 25(1)(b) of the Parliament of Canada Act, I have addressed on Monday, January 14, 2002, and on Friday, January 25, 2002, my warrants to the Chief Electoral Officer for the issue of writs for the election of members to fill these vacancies.

* * *

•(1105)

BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

The Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that Mr. Garry Breitkreuz, member for the electoral district of Yorkton—Melville, has been appointed member of the Board of Internal Economy in place of Mr. Dick Harris, member for the electoral district of Prince George—Bulkley Valley.

I have the honour to inform the House that Mr. Ralph Goodale, member for the electoral district of Wascana, has been appointed member of the Board of Internal Economy in place of Mr. Don Boudria, member for the electoral district of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

MEMBER FOR SOURIS—MOOSE MOUNTAIN

Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I stand before the House, and once again before

the nation, to state my regrets about comments I made regarding the Hon. Minister of Veterans Affairs and to apologize.

As soon as this news story broke concerning remarks I made regarding the minister's appointment, I immediately spoke to him on the phone and offered my apologies which, I might add, were graciously received. I also informed the minister that I would at the very first opportunity, and there cannot be more of a first one than right now, come before the House and repeat that apology.

My public career of more than 50 years has been free of any such incident. I can assure members that they can go to wherever I have worked and everyone would agree.

I have apologized to my wife, to my family, to my three Chinese sisters, and believe it or not, to a Japanese brother-in-law. They have all suffered through this with me. I have already apologized to my caucus, which has accepted my apology and fully supports me standing before the House today.

Not only do I believe in the equality of all Canadians, not only do I believe that they should not be judged on the colour of their skin, I have practised that in my lifetime and it might be interesting to sometime share some of these stories with the House.

I want to apologize to the entire House for this unfortunate incident. As members on both sides of the House recognize, we need to continually weigh our words carefully. No one asked me to apologize today. I am doing so because I want to. I hope to continue to support the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs and other committees as long as the leader of my party wants me to serve in these capacities.

Finally, I hope that all members of the House would also accept this apology, particularly the Minister of Veterans Affairs. I hope that by my apologizing this incident is behind all of us.

Hon. Rey Pagtakhan (Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to put on the record and acknowledge that indeed the hon. member called me and how gracious of him it was to have done that. Indeed, I was very humbled.

May I say that in the noble tradition of this parliament all of us have a common purpose, that is, to serve the interests of all Canadians. Let me add those words.

*The Budget***BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

Mr. Geoff Regan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there has been consultation among the parties and I believe you would find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That a debate pursuant to Standing Order 53.1 take place this day and that the motion for consideration be that this House take note of the deployment of Canadian forces personnel in Afghanistan.

• (1110)

The Speaker: Does the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader have unanimous consent of the House to propose the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed consideration of the motion from December 12, 2001 that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, and of the amendment.

Mr. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to the budget today. As I am the first speaker in the year 2002, I want to wish everybody a happy and a successful new year.

First let me congratulate the Minister of Finance for providing an overall budget that deals extensively with the security issues facing the nation and the world in a very positive way. The minister continues to see that Canada leads the world with the stability of our nation's finances. Some will say that the markets are not showing that, and that may be true for the moment. The markets as a whole have not recognized the stability and the great shape we are in as a nation but eventually I believe they will.

I want to target my remarks, which probably comes as no surprise, mainly to the agricultural issue. I will admit right off the top that I was disappointed that there was not more financial commitment to primary producers in this budget. However, for the moment I will put a lot of faith and hope in the commitment made in both the throne speech and the budget to address the farm needs in the future.

I want to quote two points from the Minister of Finance's speech on the budget. He said:

There are few in our country who have embraced innovation and more energy than those in the agricultural community. Recent years, however, have been difficult for many farm families, particularly those dependent upon grains and oilseeds.

The budget states:

The Government of Canada is committed to providing its share of the predictable and long-term funding needed to support this approach.

This means the support to agriculture in the future.

Primary producers are in serious trouble and are discouraged. We as a government and as a country, federally, provincially, the nation as a whole, need to support these producers in their time of need because they provide the essentials of life, and that is food.

Yes, from the figures we have seen lately, the Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food will roll out the new income figures and talk about farm incomes. I do not question the fact that farm incomes are up. It was put best by the minister of agriculture, a constituent of mine in the province of Prince Edward Island. He is a Tory, and I do not often agree with the Tories, but he put this into perspective when he said:

Let's put the story in some bit of perspective. In 2000, we had potato wart. Farm incomes plummeted drastically during 2000. People could not ship their potatoes to traditional markets. Yes, both the provincial and federal governments helped in a diversion package for farmers. I think the total given out to farmers was something in the area of \$27 million which was a fraction of what they would have gotten if they had the opportunity to ship their crop to market under normal business.

He went on to say:

—because the payments were made to farmers in the spring of 2001, all of a sudden farmers' incomes were up over 2000.

This meant very little. Their incomes were up but their financial condition had not really improved to a great extent.

The general public or somebody in downtown Toronto who does not understand farming or being on a farm sees the billions of dollars in income to the farm community but does not know what the income figure really means.

According to Agriculture Canada, the average realized net income for 2001 was \$13,700. I believe that includes off-farm income.

Given the responsibilities, the stress and everything else that farmers have to deal with, from weather to international trade wars to the big debt that they owe in terms of investment on their properties, they carry a tremendous amount of debt.

• (1115)

Mr. Speaker, would you want to put in the hours those farmers do providing an essential service to the nation and be paid \$13,700? Would the deputy minister of agriculture want to work those hours for that kind of salary? Sometimes in my worst moments I think the salary of deputy minister should be pegged to the average realized net income on farms. Maybe then this issue would be taken more seriously.

The fact is that net incomes are up but what a farmer takes home for his risks and work is just unacceptable. I am taking the Minister of Finance at his word that this issue will be dealt with in the future.

I forgot to mention that I will be sharing my time with the member for Mississauga West.

The Budget

If we do not immediately deal with the farm income problem the consequences will be very serious to the economic health of rural communities and the nation, and to food security, an issue we should all be concerned about at this time in our history.

As a member of the Prime Minister's task force on future opportunities in agriculture, the most troubling evidence we heard while sitting at one of the round tables talking to farmers was that 8 out of 10 farmers said that they would not recommend that their sons farm. That is serious. We are talking about the future of the food production industry in our country. The issue must be dealt with in terms of the cash return on the farm.

Ingeborg Boyens, in her book, *Another Season's Promise: Hope and Despair in Canada's Farm Country*, had this to say along the same lines:

If farmers continue to leave the land, we may find ourselves in a situation where Canada no longer has the ability to feed itself.

That is serious indeed.

I know the minister and the department are talking about a new vision. I want to emphasize that such a vision must be aggressive and committed, including the commitment of finances to the farm community. It should lay out some principles. It should lay out how many producers we really want in the country. Let us see the numbers. Let us see what the country wants to move toward in terms of size. Let us set some objectives.

I believe we should even set income targets, maybe as a percentage of the industrial wage. Let us see where the government's commitment is really at in terms of the farm community.

In my view the Government of Canada should seriously commit more money to the farm community. In doing so we must be honest about the situation. I hear all too often from farm leadership that the Americans are subsidizing a lot and that maybe as a country we cannot afford that same kind of commitment. We are not a poor country. We are taking our food production system for granted. We can afford to support our farmers. We cannot send a message to the Americans, our main competitors, telling them that we will not stand by our farmers while they are standing by theirs.

According to the OECD figures, which I will not have time to go through extensively, Canada's support levels have fallen from 33% to 18% of what is called the subsidy equivalent from the period 1986-88 compared to 1998-2000. In the United States, its figures have fallen from 25% to 23% in comparatively the same term, but it is spending a lot more money.

● (1120)

I have listened to U.S. senator Tom Harkin debate the issue of agriculture. He talked about the need for them to maximize out at their WTO commitments. We are not hearing that from our side. We have to hear that.

I believe that in the future the vision must have principles. It must be committed to supporting our farmers at the primary production level. I would even suggest that either the minister, the Prime Minister or the finance minister hold an international meeting with other farm leaders around the world to begin dealing with this issue on the international stage.

Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the member's speech because he is a person with a little bit of insight with respect to agriculture and of the shortcomings of the Liberal government with respect to the food supply in our country.

I would like to ask him a specific question regarding western farmers, because obviously he does not have that good a connection to the western farmers plight at this time. Maybe I should correct that and say that we will let him talk about how good his connection is.

If a lot of western Canadian farmers could be set free from the tyranny of the government, they could look after themselves very well. The government does not permit them to market their own grain. They are forced to bring it to the wheat board. The wheat board may tell the farmer that it does not want the grain right now or, if it does want it, that it will give the farmer a substandard price for it.

Why does the Liberal government insist on holding the western farmers in shackles instead of setting them free to make a prosperous living in their farming industry?

Mr. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, I will not get into a debate about the experience in western Canada other than to say that I have spent 17 years of my life fighting western farm and national farm issues. The government is committed to the farm community when it needs to be. I believe the Minister of Finance will follow through on the commitment in the budget in the future.

Let us deal specifically with the Canadian Wheat Board. The difference between our party and the hon. member's party is that we strongly support the farm community. The members of the Canadian Wheat Board's board of directors are now elected in a fair and open electoral system. Pollings in western Canada show that a great majority of western Canadians support the Canadian Wheat Board.

When we look at the evidence we see that some farmers want to market their grain outside the wheat board. We see that kind of system in my home province in the potato industry where we have four exporters down in a foreign country on four corners of a city trying to sell potatoes to a foreign buyer. The buyer will go around saying that he can buy for half a cent less from that fellow over there so the seller drops his price. The net impact when we allow anarchy to involve itself in a market system is that it drives prices down.

What the Canadian Wheat Board does is it maximizes returns. There are not enough returns in the international grain community because of the subsidies in Europe and the United States right now because of the international grain trade war. However, the Canadian Wheat Board can at least sell as a Canadian seller and maximize the returns that are in the marketplace and return them to primary producers. That is a commitment that the government has given to producers which it has stood by time and time again. We will not be dictated to by the minority.

The Budget

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member for Malpeque has given us some stirring words about the looming crisis in agriculture. I would challenge him today to indicate how he intends to pressure his government, which goes to the heart of the reason we are in this dilemma today, for support for the family farm and to ensure that this very important part of Canadian identity is preserved and enhanced.

Given the looming crisis in health care, is he also prepared to stand up to his government and demand that the budgetary surplus we are dealing with today will be allocated to the crisis in agriculture, to the crisis in health care and to those institutions and programs that unite this country and tie us together?

• (1125)

Mr. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, I believe the Minister of Finance made a commitment in his budget speech. That commitment has to be followed through by dollars going to primary producers in our rural communities.

Agriculture and agrifood is one of Canada's most important economic sectors. One in seven Canadians have jobs as a result of that. I admit that we must do better for this most important industry. We must ensure the share of that food dollar and the benefits of the economic—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member. The hon. member for Mississauga West.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Steve Mahoney (Mississauga West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are pleased to be back in Ottawa and back in the House of Commons.

[*English*]

I am not sure how long it will last but I think we are all pleased to be back. I can see that perhaps the attacks have already started on my colleague who just gave a very informed and passionate speech on the state of agriculture and what needs to be done.

I would like to shift gears a bit. First, I would like to congratulate and say good luck to all officers of this place on the opposition side and the new cabinet ministers who have been appointed. The next year will be a real challenge and an important year, as will the next couple of years, as we try to continue the very positive development of this great country, Canada, both domestically and around the world.

I would like to talk a little about our international commitments in the budget. As the hon. members know, over \$1 billion was committed over three years for international assistance, including a \$500 million fund promoting sustainable development in Africa and additional funds for Afghanistan.

Why is that important to Canada and to Canadians? Clearly, if we look at what is happening on the continent of Africa, we have a seething continent which could implode before the world's very eyes if some very serious attention is not paid to the problems there, whether they be places like Zimbabwe and the potential uprising under the current leader, President Mugabe, or like Nairobi with the serious refugee problem flowing out of other worn torn parts of that continent. I think particularly of Sudan and Somalia.

I had what I would call almost a life altering experience when I travelled to Nairobi with the minister of immigration. I also want to talk a little about the situation with regard to refugees and the commitment to improve our situation at the Canada-U.S. border. Before I do that, I want to tell the House about the experience I had when I travelled to Nairobi, Kenya.

We climbed on a small aircraft and flew into the desert where there were three refugee camps which held 110,000 people. One water tap serviced all these people. They were living in conditions that Canadians could not possibly imagine having to live under. Those people had lost everything. They had to flee their homes in the middle of the night for reasons such as war.

I heard a story about a woman who had applied to come to Canada. In the middle of the night she witnessed her husband being dragged out to the front yard, shot in the head and killed by the secret police. Her teenage son who rushed out to help was also shot and killed. Her younger son was thrown on a truck and she never saw him again. She was then dragged off to jail, imprisoned and gang raped for several months by the guards in that prison. We are not sure how, but she managed to escape with her remaining three children. She made her way to an immigration office in Nairobi and told her story. Anyone who could listen to the story of that woman and her experiences and still have a dry eye, in my view, would not possibly be very human.

As a national politician, speaking on behalf of everyone in this place, I think it is safe to say that we have a responsibility to ensure that humanitarian aid is provided throughout the world. We must try to solve some of the problems that are literally creating these crises. It is an obligation I have learned Canada must live up to.

Stephen Lewis, a distinguished former member of this place and a former leader of the New Democratic Party in Ontario, has been charged with the responsibility of attacking the problem of AIDS.

• (1130)

In the city of Nairobi, which has a population of a couple of million people, not unlike the city of Toronto in size to give it some scope, 500 people per day die in hospitals from AIDS. That is absolutely unimaginable. In the countryside women are forced to go down huge gullies to rivers to get water which they carry up on their backs. It does not matter if they are six or seven months pregnant. They still have to go down to get the water and bring it back up.

Canadians cannot imagine this. I cannot imagine it. We hear stories and see newscasts about it, but I still cannot imagine that sort of problem exists. In Afghanistan it is fundamentally and primarily the women and children who are forced to pay the price of the result of what is happening in that part of the world.

What do we do? In my view, we have to support our colleagues in the war on terrorism. However, somehow we have to ensure that the international aid, which exists in this budget and in other budgets around the world, gets through and on the ground in those places, whether it is in Africa, Afghanistan or Kosovo. Wherever it is, Canada has stature in the world.

The Budget

The level of respect that people around the world hold for this small nation with a population of 30 million is really quite remarkable. It is our obligation to support the \$1 billion for international aid in the budget and to take the message to our communities. I am not sure it gets on the ground, whether it is in Mississauga, Saskatoon or Vancouver. We must stand up as a full member of the international community and support this kind of assistance.

There are many reasons for that. If we want to be callous about it, we could say many of these places are future marketplaces. The reality is whether they are or not, we have an international obligation to help these people. I hope all members will support that aspect of the budget.

Let me speak very briefly about the commitment of \$1.2 billion to improve security at the Canada-U.S. border and what is going on with that.

The Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration split in two prior to Christmas. One half of the committee went with the chairman to western Canada, and as vice-chair, I took the other half to eastern Canada, specifically New Brunswick and Quebec. I was astounded to hear all the fuss being made about this so-called leaky Canadian border, much of it coming from our colleagues in congress, in Texas and places like that who frankly would not know that Vermont borders Quebec as they have demonstrated time and time again.

The real problem is not a leaky Canadian border. The real problem is with the American border and the fact that 40% of refugees who claim refugee status in Canada come through the United States.

How does that happen? It means refugees are there on a legal visa. They are studying, working or visiting. They get on a bus somewhere down south, ride to the end of I-95 and walk across the border at a place called Lacolle, Quebec. Last year we had 5,000 refugee claims. The reverse flow was 58. Tell me where the problem is?

We have asked the Americans to sign what is called a third safe country agreement, which I hope they will do. Certainly we are getting somewhere in dealing with them. Third safe country simply means that if someone is in a safe country like the United States, that person is not eligible to apply for refugee status in Canada. It is a huge step forward in our relationships with our colleagues and friends to the south.

The \$1.2 billion in the budget will go into technology at our borders and will ensure that people who frequently cross the border will get through quickly, while at the same time ensure that our borders are secure. It is the budget and the government that will ensure that happens.

• (1135)

In closing, I plead with people to recognize the support in the budget for international aid and for security and safety at our border.

Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the member commented to the effect that the Americans are unaware that Vermont borders on Quebec. I cannot

believe the government and the members will stand here today and bash the Americans, our best friends in the whole wide world.

The hon. member mentioned that 5,000 immigrants have applied to come to Canada from the United States. Could he comment on the many reports in our newspapers of people being smuggled in container ships, cars and trucks into the United States? That is what the Americans are angry about. The government has done nothing with regard to border security on behalf of Canadians.

Mr. Steve Mahoney: Mr. Speaker, unlike my honourable colleague opposite and his entire party, our research department does not consist of the local media. We do our homework on this kind of thing. We have been to the borders and members of that party have been to the borders. As a matter of fact, I stand corrected. A member of that party refused to come on our trip to the border because the member did not seem interested in finding out what was happening on the ground. I do not quite understand that kind of mentality, but it is there for all to see.

The reality is that this is not about bashing the Americans. I have heard congressmen from Texas and a congresswoman from one of the border states in the north, Minnesota I think it was, stand and say the problem is with the Canadian border. The facts do not back that claim up.

That is not to say the Americans are not our friends. They obviously are. We are standing with them in the war against terrorism. However in no circumstances should we allow members opposite, the media, or an ill-informed congressman from Texas to stand and make statements that are factually untrue.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while it is amusing to hear the government member and the official opposition member trade barbs over which way people are going back and forth and whether the Americans or the Canadians are more to blame in terms of border crossings, both members have missed the point.

If we had policies, programs and budgetary priorities that focused on supporting and strengthening human security and common security instead of security through law enforcement or for large multinational corporations in terms of trading, maybe people would not be placed in an environment where they are fleeing from countries where they are persecuted and faced with the prospect of trying to enter the U.S. or Canada or wherever it may be.

I was very interested in the member's comments about the importance of international aid. I agree with his comments. However if the member is so concerned about the millions of people facing AIDS and the threat of AIDS, why has the government not taken on the multinational corporations that are denying basic access to drugs and assistance that would help people in those situations—

• (1140)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): I am sorry to interrupt but there is not much time left.

Mr. Steve Mahoney: Mr. Speaker, there is always an NDP solution to every problem in the world, and it is usually the wrong solution. They somewhat naively think we can solve the problem by simply attacking big international companies. I do not know what that does.

The Budget

We have committed \$1 billion to international aid. We have said we are establishing an Africa fund of \$500 million. We are putting our money with our mouth as a nation when it comes to helping within the reasonable means available to us.

Our first obligation is obviously to Canadians here at home. At the same time the government is committed to helping international crises and problems in Africa, Afghanistan and wherever they occur in hot spots around the world.

Our record clearly speaks for itself. It is something all Canadians can be proud of, in spite of the member's comments.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I wish to inform you that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel.

It is my turn to speak on this absolutely disappointing budget. This was a budget that was slow in coming. We had to keep on saying it was necessary. Now that we have it, it is an absolute disappointment.

My time is limited, but I am going to take the time to point out that we share the same conviction as the others about the underestimation of the surplus, and the fact that the government is keeping it out of any public debate.

The first few times that Bloc Québécois members said this, a number of people had serious doubts about what we were saying. Now they believe the legitimacy of our criticism, which has now become generalized. Once again, this budget underestimates revenues.

What is more, there is nothing in it to enable the provinces to meet health and education requirements, and that is serious. As we have seen, Quebec is not the only one complaining; all of the provinces can use the means at their disposal, including withdrawal from the social union, as Quebec already has.

It should be pointed out that since 1993 transfers to Quebec and the provinces have been slashed and reduced by 18%. This is significant, considering the importance of these transfers and the promises that were made previous to these cuts.

It is obvious that this budget reflects the federal government's inaction. Since 1993, expenditures have remained basically the same, in spite of previous announcements of cuts to spending. What has gone up is the revenues related to growth and generated by an abusive use. We simply cannot find the words to say how despicable it is on the federal government's part to have used unemployment insurance surpluses for its ordinary spending. Back home, and this is probably also the case in other regions, this action is likely to discredit the government in the public's eye. These UI contributions were used to reduce the overall deficit.

Since I was first elected, UI contributions have been paid in full by workers, up to an income of \$39,000, after which the rate goes down. These contributions are also paid primarily by small and medium size businesses. It is the contributions made by these workers and businesses that allowed the government to reduce its deficit and increase its revenues.

It is scandalous, and instead of following up on the unanimous recommendations of the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development, this budget only maintains business as usual. Moreover, it was announced that from now on funds would be generated through contributions only, without using the accumulated surpluses.

I would be remiss if I did not briefly comment on something that the public finds shocking, something the effects of which are not yet fully known. I am referring to the fact that we do not know the anticipated amounts for infrastructures, because these amounts will be provided only if there is a surplus. We do not know what the amount will actually be, even though the government may promise \$2 billion.

• (1145)

What is worse is that instead of continuing through the channels that have been developed after the necessary adjustments, which in some cases took quite some time, instead of continuing to provide quick funding to projects that will help see us through this economic downturn—we are still on the verge of a recession, after all—instead of this, the government has decided to create in the spring a foundation for which funding will be allocated in the fall. This funding is beyond the control of the House and does not fulfill this government's commitments, and is beyond the government's control in theory. The foundation will no longer come under the House's jurisdiction.

This infrastructure program funded by the three levels of government, in other words with the provinces and the municipalities, will be managed by people appointed by the government from now on. Not only does this executive have outrageous powers, but it is downloading them to keep the House from having any say, even though it hardly had any in the first place.

I would like to close by commenting on the slight increase in foreign aid. As critic on foreign affairs, I would like to stress the importance of the budget for international assistance, particularly at this time.

The government has announced an increase of \$1 billion, of which \$500 million will also depend on the surplus. This \$500 million will be spent on eradicating poverty or on the African program. We know how serious the issue of poverty is in Africa and we know the importance of words like AIDS, and the tremendous needs in education and health in general.

However, if one was to look at total spending, the Government of Canada made a commitment in 1990 to increase spending on international assistance, within a reasonable period, to 0.7% of the gross national product, or wealth. Our spending on international aid, which is currently at 0.25%, will be increasing to 0.26%. When Canada made this commitment in 1990, we were already giving 0.48%. Proportionally, we are now giving half of what we gave in 1990, in terms of our wealth. We will be going from just over 0.24% to 0.26%.

The Budget

This is not nearly enough. Why, particularly right now? Although we may not be able to say that poverty and injustice are the immediate causes of the international terrorism which we have been talking about since September 11, we can say that poverty, injustice and the lack of educational and health resources take a situation made bad by injustice and make it worse. This situation, in turn, contributes to terrorism and plays into the hands of those who favour terrorism as a solution to the problems.

International aid is not charity. It is simply the sharing of wealth, which will come back to us in another form, be it peace, trade, a less dangerous, less unfair world, a world that will be a better one for our children and our grandchildren.

• (1150)

But with Canada's present level of international aid, and particularly with this increase, it is hard to picture Canada reaching the 0.7% that five of Europe's smallest and most social democratic countries have reached and are maintaining.

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to what the member said. She spoke passionately about international aid as did my colleague from Mississauga West.

The Africa fund is not simply an increase to \$500 million. There has been a change in policy so that the Africa fund will be much more focused than in the past. It will deal with basic education, particularly for children; gender issues, particularly the needs of women; and AIDS as an aspect of health in Africa.

We will be working co-operatively wherever we can with like-minded donor nations, but also with appropriate local African governments. We can do that because Canada is one of the members of both the Commonwealth, the anglophone group in Africa, and la Francophonie, the francophone group. That is one of the reasons Canadian aid is particularly effective. Our \$500 million would go much further than someone else's \$500 million.

I understand the sense of the member's remarks. With Canada's special status in the World Trade Organization, it can use its influence with major nations of the world to get them to increase aid to Africa. Would she support us and help us with that in la Francophonie and the Commonwealth?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, the position the Bloc Québécois has taken on many occasions has, if I may say so, been to be of assistance to the government, in that it points out to it that what is it doing is not enough.

I have heard his reference in English to "what we are doing with the \$500 million", but what he needs to say is "what we will be doing", because there will be \$500 million in this budget if there is a surplus. That is the position that has been taken. We can, of course, say that, since we know there will be a surplus, the \$500 million will be available.

The government has not, however, said "We are making a firm commitment". Where the expenditure of \$1 billion is concerned, with only 26.6% for international aid, the government is making this commitment in a kind of roundabout way, "if there is a surplus".

What we in the opposition can provide in the way of assistance is to point out just how overblown the image of Canada is as far as international aid is concerned. I am pleased to be able to quote the words used by the present Deputy Prime Minister back when he was Minister of Foreign Affairs. In connection with Canada's foreign aid performance, he said "You can't just sit at the G-8 table and then, when the bill comes, go to the washroom or sneak out the back door".

We will continue to pressure the government and to point out to the public that this is important, not gratuitous charity, not just throwing money away. On the contrary, what we are seeing on the international level is worsening crime, poverty, lack of education and injustice, while here in the western countries, most of which are democracies, we have rapid means of communication and a greater need for education, so the gap is widening between us and the developing countries—to use the politically correct term—but they are often downright poor countries, in fact.

We can be counted on to remind the government that it is not doing enough globally. I would be delighted to be able to say "Congratulations, you are making a serious effort and living up to Canada's world reputation", but the present budget does not do anything in this connection.

• (1155)

[*English*]

Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, international aid is valued in U.S. dollars. Canada is sending \$500 million. Our money is not equivalent to the U.S. value of that aid. Does the member from the Bloc Québécois see anything in this budget that would strengthen our dollar, strengthen the productivity of this country and increase our ability to provide aid to the countries that need it?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, the question raised by the hon. member is an important one. It is a question that is primarily economic in nature.

I have returned from a trip to Mexico with my leader, the member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie, and my colleague, the member for Trois-Rivières. We met with various Mexican officials, with business people, labour representatives and others to discuss the proposal for an institute to look at a single currency for the sake of efficiencies. I understand the question he is asking, and the answer is no.

Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to thank my colleague, the hon. member for Mercier, for her speech. Quebecers, and even Canadians who are watching, must understand that when it comes to a budget, it is very important to know our revenues in order to establish the expenses that we plan on making.

The problem with the Minister of Finance is that for several years now, he has been underestimating revenues as well as the surplus, which has the obvious effect of restricting investment because we are told that the government's income is not as great as expected.

The Budget

Let us not forget that the current Minister of Finance underestimated the budget impact or balance for 1999-2000 by \$9.3 billion. For 2000-2001, he underestimated it by \$12.6 billion.

It is easy to understand why the Bloc Québécois, as outlined by our knowledgeable finance critic in his speech, believes that once again the Minister of Finance is underestimating the budgetary balance by \$6 billion. This is \$6 billion that we cannot debate and that the Minister of Finance has not told his Liberal government colleagues about. He has drafted a budget that undervalues and underestimates the Government of Canada's budget surplus by \$6 billion.

Obviously, this is a budget which offers nothing new in terms of health and education, areas of growing need in provinces throughout Canada and particularly in Quebec. This budget offers nothing in the way of increased protection for workers or the unemployed in terms of employment insurance. Let us remember that \$40 billion of the surplus in the EI fund was transferred—simply stolen by the government—to the consolidated revenue fund. This therefore becomes part of the annual surpluses and is spent on things other than ensuring or improving the security of those facing job loss, those who are among the poorest members of our society.

Once again, the surplus has been underestimated. The government is not investing in the needs of the unemployed, of workers. It is not investing in health and education. This is difficult to understand, particularly when the Minister of Finance has just told us that health costs have increased. Why is the federal government, which paid approximately 14% of Quebec's health costs in 2001, now paying only 13% in 2002? This is hard for the public to understand.

The Minister of Finance tells us that the government will be spending more in 2002 than in 2001. The problem is that health costs are rising dramatically. I was the president of the Union des municipalités du Québec during the major reform in 1997. In 1997, health spending in Quebec was just over \$10 billion. In 2002, it will reach almost \$14 billion. The increase in costs is dramatic, going up by approximately 10% a year. But the federal contribution is not keeping pace. And that is why Quebecers and Canadians must not be taken in.

The federal government is spending more in 2002 than in 2001, but it is not keeping up with the increase in health costs. We must keep up with the increase in the cost of new technologies, new drugs and new developments. It is our duty as a responsible society. The Government of Quebec must do likewise. We must keep up with the dramatic advances in this field. Once again, the government has ignored the demands of the provinces in connection with health and education.

I now turn to the issue of security. I am the Bloc Québécois critic on transportation issues. It goes without saying that significant amounts were invested in security. In the case of aviation security, \$2.2 billion will be collected through a tax, but the federal government will not contribute one penny. It will collect a \$24 tax —\$12 each way — from travellers. This tax will bring in \$2.2 billion to cover the \$2.2 billion spending increase in an industry that has felt the impact of the September 11, 2001 events.

The industry does not have any money, of course, and it is being taxed. This budget does not provide any money for economic development.

• (1200)

That decision was condemned by every organization involved in economic development, by the provinces, including Quebec, which decided to base its most recent budget on economic development. In times of crisis, economic development should be promoted, but this is not what Canada did. The best example is in the airline industry. That industry was the one most affected by the events of September 11. No other industry was hit as hard as the airline industry; yet, there is nothing in this budget to help it get back on track.

All the legislation proposed by the Liberal government shows that it will be a free market situation. As we saw during the holiday season, airline services and companies in the regions disappeared one after the other, including Canada 3000, in the fall of 2001. Regional companies are shutting down and the government will let the free market prevail.

Costs will increase tremendously in the regions, and some regions will no longer be served. That was the case with Air Canada Regional, which announced in Quebec City that some regions of Quebec would no longer be served by the end of 2002, when its obligations to provide service to these regions will no longer be in effect, under the act passed by parliament. The act will cease to be in effect and Air Canada will no longer have an obligation to provide service to these regions.

So, Air Canada will simply decide to follow the market, based on the will of its shareholders, because shareholders are only interested in getting more dividends every three months and an increased value for their shares.

There is nothing in this budget to lessen the pressure on the regions; economic development is at great risk in all regions, in Quebec and in the rest of Canada. There is no assistance for regional development. Once again, the best proof of this is in the area of airline security: \$2.2 billion for airport security will come totally from user fees. This will just be one more burden for airline customers. There is not in any way an incentive to air travel.

It is simple. When we want to discourage smoking, we raise the tax on tobacco. Raising the tax on air travel will discourage people from taking the plane. That is the Liberal strategy the Minister of Finance has introduced in the House, while shameless concealing \$6 billion in this budget. That is how the Minister of Finance always does things.

I repeat, for you and for our Quebec listeners, in 1999-2000 the Minister of Finance was \$9.3 billion low with his estimate; in 2000-2001 he was \$12.6 billion off. The bulk of that amount went to the debt, but it is still necessary for the people of Quebec and Canada to know what the real state of public finances is, when we are in a crisis situation.

The Budget

Once again, the Minister of Finance has been low in his estimates. He has kept \$6 billion from the population, money that could have been used to kickstart economic development, or put into health and education or toward improving employment insurance. Unemployed people across Canada are calling for more resources, more weeks of benefits, and abolition of the famous two week penalty period before collecting an insurance they are paying for themselves.

I would remind hon. members that the Government of Canada is not putting one cent into the EI fund. Every cent of it comes from workers and employers. This is the reality: a government helping itself to the money that belongs to Canada's workers and employers, paying no attention to what the public wants. That is what the budget that has been introduced is like.

Incidentally, we have seen polling that indicates that the Minister of Finance's speech was poorly received. It was probably the worst of all of his budgets. Polling shows that people are disgruntled, and they are not happy with the current Minister of Finance. In these times of crisis, he has been unable to explain to Quebecers and Canadians our real state of affairs and to invest in areas where there are real needs, such as economic development, and help out the airline industry in particular, rather than slapping them with a tax. We increase tobacco taxes when we want people to stop smoking; we have now created a tax on air transportation, which will discourage people from flying.

This is the reality of this budget. The government has not invested in health, nor in education, areas where spending increases 10% annually. Last year, in 2001, Canada paid 14% of expenditures in Quebec; in 2002 it will pay 13%, but while there has been an increase in the amount received by Quebec, spending has increased so much that Canada's contribution has dropped.

● (1205)

[English]

Mr. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am astonished the member would mention polls in his discourse. The weekend papers showed that the Liberals gained huge amounts over the Bloc in Quebec in the most recent polls.

I will talk about the numbers of the last two speakers. They talked about admirable areas to invest money in, with which I think we all agree. However the problem is that the numbers do not add up. We have a balanced budget with nothing to spare. If we are to make more expenditures we must explain where they will go. The budget had a lot of security expenditures but still included as many social items as it could, such as help for aboriginal children and the environment.

The last two speakers mentioned adding expenditures but suggested no way to pay for them. These included EI, foreign aid, health care, education, airlines and economic development. They mentioned health care numerous times, forgetting that last fall we signed an accord with the provinces including Quebec to which all the provinces agreed and which contained the largest health care expenditures in history.

The member and other members keep bringing up health care and saying it should be debated during this session. My question is this: What tax points were transferred to Quebec over and above the

transfer payment? How much did the recent tax points come to in dollars? A lot of people do not make that point.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Laframboise: Mr. Speaker, regarding opinion polls, I simply wanted to point out to the hon. member that this is the first time that the Government of Canada has received a poor rating for a budget.

For years now, the Liberal government has bragged about its good budgets. In the polls that will no doubt be made public over the course of this year, we will see what happens as Quebecers and Canadians realize that there is no investment whatsoever in economic development, when they see the results of this latest budget. We will see the Liberal Party's performance reflected in the polls.

Again, as regards to health—and I could return the question to the hon. member—why is it that the government can invest more money in 2002 than it did in 2001, but contribute less money to cover expenditures? Simply because expenditures are increasing faster than the money that is invested. It is simply for that reason. This is a reality throughout the world.

The health sector is growing exponentially because of the new technologies, research, drugs and everything like that. The federal government is simply not keeping up with the changes. It is providing more money than it did in previous years, but the percentage of its contribution to health expenditures is diminishing, because it is not contributing enough, since health care costs and management come under the jurisdiction of the provinces.

It is the provinces that have the unfortunate responsibility of bearing the brunt of the catastrophic spending increase in the health sector, while the federal government is simply washing its hands, saying “We are investing a little more than we did last year, so stop complaining”. The reality is that costs are increasing exponentially, at an annual rate of 10%. They will have doubled in seven years.

● (1210)

[English]

Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the hon. member who represents a constituency in Quebec. I have always wanted to ask this question. When I look at the various grants that go to different provinces I see that well over 80% of heritage grants go to the province of Quebec.

Being from Saskatchewan I have the right to ask the question. Does the member complain about that or should I complain about it?

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Laframboise: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member looks at the money spent on cultural issues, he will see all the efforts being made in Quebec to sell this Canadian nation building image across our province.

The Budget

We of course complain about the federal government's pervasive and excessive presence in Quebec, with all this advertising, whether it is to promote hunting, fishing or new inventions. Canada even promoted the merits of new drugs for men who have erectile problems. There is always something being sponsored by the federal government, with a small Canadian flag on display, when it is a televised ad. We are not satisfied or pleased with what Canada is doing.

I say to hon. members "If you want some ads, just ask and you too will get nice Canadian ads in your provinces".

[English]

Mr. John Bryden (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Aldershot, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will be sharing my time with the member for Stoney Creek.

I would like first just to spend a minute to comment on the intervention from the member for Souris—Moose Mountain when he apologized for some remarks he made pertinent to the veterans affairs minister. I just wanted to assure him on this side of the House we never for one moment thought anything other than these remarks were a little bit of a *gaucherie*, shall we say, that could happen to any of us.

I must say I was a little disappointed when the member for Richmond who crossed the floor to this side was quoted in the paper as saying that the reason was because of the remarks made by the member for Souris—Moose Mountain. I wish to assure you, Mr. Speaker, that had the member for Richmond asked us on this side we would have told him that the member for Souris—Moose Mountain's heart is as big as the prairie from which he comes and that we would never suspect him of any intolerance whatsoever, a mistake perhaps that could happen even to the Prime Minister, and indeed if the member for Richmond wants to leave the Canadian Alliance Party in order to have a better opportunity with the Liberals then we could understand that, but certainly the member for Souris—Moose Mountain is an excellent member of parliament and it is a pleasure being in the Chamber with him even though he is on the opposite side.

Having said that, I wish to address my remarks in the budget to the expenditures pertinent to the armed forces. After the budget came down and particularly during the break the Prime Minister in particular was subject to a number of attacks in the press because of the failure, so-called, in the budget to sufficiently support the military, and the Prime Minister made a comment to the effect that he did not want to see expenditures on obsolete ideas and that the military often wants to spend money on basically equipment and ideas that are obsolescent.

I believe he is quite right. There has been enormous change in the way wars are fought and the type of responsibilities that our Canadian forces will be confronting in the immediate years to come. For instance, the tank is now completely obsolete because of the development of laser guided infantry weapons that can knock out a tank. Even helicopters which represent an enormous capital outlay are extremely vulnerable again to these infantry held weapons, and the submarine again is completely obsolete.

I am actually happy that we invested in frigates which are currently some of the most modern military ships in the world, the

Canadian frigates. These surface vessels have found their own again because of the vulnerability of underwater military craft.

Mr. Speaker, I thought it was overlooked in the budget debate the fact that about a billion dollars was spent, extremely wisely in my view, on the military file. I draw your attention to the fact that I think it was \$119 million has been spent on the special forces team that we have called Joint Task Force 2 which I believe is in Afghanistan right now. This represents a recognition on the part of the government that in the wars to come they are going to be fought not by the general infantry so much as by the special forces, so this was I think a very appropriate investment.

Again, I think some \$500 million over five years is to be spent on increasing Canada's capability to respond to attack by chemical or biological warfare, even nuclear weapons. I think it is little known by Canadians that Canada for 50 years has had a continuing research program in the development of countermeasures to chemical and biological warfare threats. Indeed, the Canadian forces personnel from Suffield, Alberta where most of the research is conducted were invited by the Americans to come down and give them advice that pertained to how to counteract these letters that the Americans were receiving that contained anthrax. I do note in passing that it has now been determined that these letters would appear to have come from not international terrorism but from some kind of domestic source, obviously a lunatic of some kind.

• (1215)

We have to acknowledge that the world is becoming a more and more dangerous place, and the military has to be cognizant not only of external threats like international terrorists but of the plethora of threats that can come from just the development of scientific knowledge that puts in the hands of people who perhaps are unstable the kind of weapons that are very dangerous to humanity.

I would also like to note that the government has committed \$200 million directly to the Canadian forces being used against the terrorist threat which would include the Canadian forces destined to Afghanistan. I think we should note that one of the reasons why the Americans wanted the Canadian forces to be involved in Afghanistan in Kandahar was the fact that they are equipped with the Canadian designed and Canadian built Coyote light armoured vehicle which is an excellent tool for monitoring the type of battlefield that the Canadians are expecting to encounter in Afghanistan. The Coyote carries a variety of sensory equipment that enables it to locate enemy infantry at a distance, so it is a very sophisticated piece of equipment.

I would suggest that the government has moved in the right direction in that it is investing in technology that represents the threats to come rather than the threats in the past.

That leads me to put in a little bit of advertisement in this House and tell any Canadians who are watching that there is going to be a take note debate tonight after the vote in which this House will freely discuss the deployment of Canadian troops in Afghanistan under the Americans, and I wish to signal one of my concerns with respect to that.

The Budget

I certainly support Canada helping the Americans in the fight against terrorism. Indeed, I would ordinarily support wholeheartedly the Canadian forces in Afghanistan with the Americans, but there are a number of us on this side of the House and I presume on the other side of the House that are increasingly uneasy about the situation with the prisoners being held by the Americans in Guantanamo Bay.

I am not so concerned myself about the debate, whether they are prisoners of war or illegal combatants or whatever, because I am confident that the Americans will treat them humanely and there is a question of what do we do with this type of person in the long run, so there is a legitimate debate there.

What does concern me is the fact that they are being held on Guantanamo Bay which is territory outside the United States. In fact it is Cuban soil, which means American laws do not apply to those prisoners being held under military authority or military power by the Americans on Guantanamo Bay. That also means that there is no commitment on the part of the United States to respect its obligations to conventions on human rights and prisoner of war protocols that it may have signed with the United Nations.

To my mind it sends the very wrong message, and I hope that the Americans will listen to the debate we are going to have here tonight because it will not represent in any sense a lack of will to support our American brothers, shall we say, in the fight against terrorism, but some of us are very concerned that holding prisoners outside of American legal jurisdiction sends the wrong message to those countries of the world which do not have a respect for human rights, do not have the same sort of respect for the rule of law that we proudly as democracies, Canada, the United States, Britain and many of the European nations have, so I hope that Canadians will listen to the debate tonight, to remember that the issue of the prisoners at Guantanamo Bay is a human rights issue. It is an issue of great import to how the western democracies will be viewed by the rest of the world in the future as we all struggle to combat the international terrorism.

• (1220)

Mr. Tony Valeri (Stoney Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak on the budget debate and to discuss with fellow parliamentarians the impact of this debate on Canadians and on our economy.

It is fair to say that once again this budget has provided Canadians with some choices in terms of the economy moving forward, the quality of life and the standard of living that they can expect. In terms of framing the debate and speaking about the budget it is also important that we make reference to 9/11 and the impact that those events had on this particular budget.

There is no question that the events of September 11 loomed very large in the minds of Canadians. It created a number of demands with respect to security improvements. Some have been mentioned earlier on in the debate. Many Canadians wanted to deal with airline safety. In this last budget we made some announcements and commitments to deal with airline safety which is critically important for the airline industry in our country.

A commitment of more than \$1.2 billion was made for new technologies to give us better Canada-U.S. co-ordination to ensure that we have secure borders between ourselves and the Americans.

As was mentioned earlier by the previous member our military received over \$1.6 billion to deal with our anti-terrorism capacity and to prepare more effectively for potential terrorist threats. An additional investment was also provided for intelligence and policing. The focus is to come down hard on the financing of terrorist groups in Canada. Other countries around the world are now focusing on that activity as well.

Beyond the security initiative we still have as an issue the competitiveness of our economy. We are continuing to compete for global investment and that translates into what should be and could be higher paying jobs and increased productivity for our economy.

We reduced personal taxes along with corporate taxes. We brought in the largest tax reduction in Canadian history which focuses on low and middle income Canadians. It turns out that it was a very well timed initiative. We are looking out for Canadian interests and Canadians have responded.

We made some strategic announcements and investments that reflect Canadian priorities and values. We protected the health care transfer to the provinces. The \$23 billion accord was signed last September in the face of 9/11 and in a downturn in the economy.

We moved on infrastructure with the \$2 billion strategic infrastructure announcement. We have a skills and learning agenda which was referred to in the House. There are items in the budget that made reference to a skills and learning agenda. We have a paper coming out in the near future where both the human resources minister and the industry minister will put forward another document.

It is one of the most pressing problems for our country. There is a global shortage of skilled workers and Canada is no different than other countries. We need to focus on replenishing that. There are approximately 250,000 to 300,000 skilled workers required for our economy to move forward. It is a complex problem and we need to focus on that.

There is a role for individual Canadians, educators in the private sector and the national government to play in outlining where those shortages are and what can be done collectively to respond to that need.

We need to focus on a goal that creates a climate for skills training and lifelong learning, a change in culture going forward so that companies may respond to the need as well. It requires national leadership. Addressing the problem is a pre-condition for continued economic stability and prosperity.

The Budget

●(1225)

Essentially the question becomes one of what we need to do to move forward. The issue of productivity is still a front burner issue for the economy. I read a quote somewhere and I cannot recall the source but it really nailed the issue. It said that "our quality of life is outstanding". Canadians generally accept that. Our standard of living needs attention. As parliamentarians and a government we need to collectively find ways to preserve the first and to enhance the second.

We need to continue to create an attractive investment climate. Canada must attract global investment that would translate into continued Canadian opportunities. We need to focus on increased research and development which would drive productivity growth and generate the positive economic spinoff. We need to continue to focus on the fiscal tools that are at our disposal such as private-public partnerships that would help leverage public funds in areas of investment such as infrastructure to accelerate growth and economic development.

Connected with all these considerations at the national level is a need to focus on cities and rural areas. The strength of a country like Canada is anchored in strong communities from coast to coast. There are some common and specific problems across Canada. We need to continue to focus on cities. National governments need to play a larger role or at least articulate a way so that we can engage local municipalities and rural areas.

One problem that a lot of cities are faced with in various parts of the country is the renewal of older industrial lands or brownfields as they are referred to. National governments need to help cities unlock the additional economic resources to attract further investment because that speaks to a quality of life and certainly a standard of living.

As a national government we can play a role in helping these cities move forward. We provided additional funding for municipalities to take advantage of in the last budget through enabling funds. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities also plays a large role in that aspect.

The question is how to deal with, maintain and preserve that quality of life and how to increase that standard of living. There are a number of ways to accomplish that. I am not an ideologue and believe that it is solely tax cuts or spending that will do that. We have to respond to various challenges that we face. We made the commitment of \$100 million in personal tax cuts and we protected that commitment in the last budget.

I do not believe that in going forward we can now put away the issue of taxation. It is still a file that requires attention and I believe there are strategic investments we need to continue to make to address the question of how to preserve the quality of life we have in Canada and how to enhance our standard of living.

Most economists continue to say that the economic picture, when we compare ourselves globally, gives us some reason for optimism. A number of economists suggest we will avoid the two quarters of negative growth, the technical recession. There is reason to believe that with a United States recovery and with our own efforts that we may in fact see the return to strong growths by the end of 2002.

In the longer term Canada needs to embrace the economic challenges in the global and North American context. It will not be good enough for Canada to be as competitive. We need to be better and I am confident that the government, with the help of parliamentarians in the House, will continue to focus on the economy so that it benefits all Canadians.

●(1230)

I believe that our future actions must reward innovation and risk while at the same time continuing to invest in our nation's prosperity.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the member's comments. In particular, I would agree that it is important to ensure that the economy benefits all Canadians. He said that the budget looks out for the interest of Canadians and that it is important that we maintain a standard of living.

However, I question whether or not the budget that we have in front of us actually does that. It is a massive security budget that has little to do with the economic security of working Canadians.

I would like to ask the member a question about the infrastructure foundation. It was interesting to me as someone from an urban area that all the messaging put out about this infrastructure program has now ended up as yet another foundation. Goodness knows how many millions of dollars will be sunk into that just in terms of the infrastructure for the infrastructure foundation.

Why did the federal government choose to set up a foundation as opposed to dealing with municipalities directly that know all too well what their infrastructure needs are in urban and smaller communities? Why would the government waste so much money in setting up yet another foundation instead of dealing directly with the infrastructure issues with municipalities?

●(1235)

Mr. Tony Valeri: Mr. Speaker, there again the hon. member is missing the point. It is not just the new strategic infrastructure foundation that was announced that she should be focusing on. That particular program is complementing the existing infrastructure program that we have.

In terms of working directly with municipalities the Federation of Canadian Municipalities represents cities and municipalities across the country. We have doubled the funding for a green municipal enabling fund, the \$100 million green municipal investment fund. We have also launched a long term program to promote the production of key renewable resources.

There are a number of ways to deal with municipalities. The member focused on the so-called strategic infrastructure foundation but there are a number of items in the budget that speak directly to the local municipalities.

We must look at the more macroeconomic approach that the government is taking and how that impacts local municipalities. When companies look to invest, they look to invest in a country and then, beyond a country, they look at provinces and then cities. It is important to have the macro picture as competitive and effective as possible.

The Budget

There are a multitude of things. It is not just the one program or foundation that will make it or break it for municipalities. We must take a multifaceted approach. We have done that in this budget. We will continue to provide that balanced approach in trying to deal with local issues because the cities in Canada themselves, as I stated, form the anchor that makes Canada a great country.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member talked quite a bit conceptually about productivity and some of the important steps that we can take in improving the productivity of Canadians. The member will know that the finance committee did a significant study on the issue of productivity about three years. It would be useful if the member could elaborate a little on productivity, what it means to our economy, employment and, as he said, the quality of life of Canadians.

Mr. Tony Valeri: Madam Speaker, with regard to the issue of productivity and how it impacts our quality of life and standard of living, there are a number of various inputs into that equation that would enhance productivity for Canadians. The whole skills agenda is one that would greatly enhance our productivity. Another is increasing productivity from the technology side. There are things that companies need to do. We must help companies import and apply greater technology to enhance their own productivity which, ultimately, would impact the quality of life that we so cherish in this country.

Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for St. Albert.

Health care is the number one priority of Canadians. Any government that does not recognize that is clearly out of touch with the Canadian public. A December 7 Ipsos-Reid poll showed that 82% of Canadians view health care as their number one concern. It appears to be somewhat lower than that on the radar screen of the federal finance minister as we look at the budget. The budget bears out exactly that it is not a priority of the government.

The finance minister found lots of money for low priority items in the budget. There was \$560 million for pet projects for the heritage minister and \$2 billion for an infrastructure foundation that nobody had asked for in the first place, just to name a couple of them. There was no money that had not been previously announced for the ailing Canadian health care system in the budget.

The government and its ministers pulled the plug on health care in the 1990s and have watched it drift into crisis. Today we are reaping the benefits of that lack of vision. Health care is clearly in distress and Canadians are paying the price. Waiting lists are continuing to plague Canadians. The shortage of doctors and nurses continues to be felt across the country, particularly in rural areas.

The College of Physicians and Surgeons recently surveyed its members. It found that two-thirds of its members, doctors, were not accepting new patients. "Doctor shortages near crisis" read a recent headline in the London *Free Press*. This was echoed in similar headlines in Edmonton, Ottawa, Elk Lake and New Brunswick.

The confidence of Canadians in their health care system has plummeted in recent years. A Statistics Canada opinion survey last weekend showed that the satisfaction in Canada's health care system is in an all-time decline. The number of Canadians who feel that the

health care system is not meeting their needs has risen by 50% in the last four years. A growing number of Canadians told the survey that the health care system has been lacking acceptability, availability and accessibility during the last 12 months. Even worse than that, more than half of the respondents said that health care problems have led them to not pursue treatment. They are fed up spending seven to twelve hours in emergency rooms.

Provincial governments continue to feel the weight and the strain of ever increasing health care pressures. Health care spending by some of the provinces accounts for more than 40% of their budgets. In fact, some of them, B.C. and Newfoundland to be precise, are projecting that it will be over 50% of their health care budgets by 2007. Some are saying that soon there will be a need for only two cabinet ministers, one to collect the taxes and one to spend them. They would be revenue and health respectively.

Health care costs will not decrease in the years ahead. As the baby boomer bubble reaches retirement age, the pressure on the health care system will greatly increase.

Health care spending over the last four years has risen by 6.5%. I am the first to say that more money is not the only answer. We have to look at more solutions than just adding more money to the system. Clearly, the annual spending increases of 6.5% are not sustainable.

We need to come up with new approaches to rein in escalating drug costs. We need to find efficient ways of delivering health care. We need to ensure a greater accountability by those who use the system and those who provide the system. We need to eliminate some of the waste in the system and promote a more responsible use of health care dollars. We need to place greater emphasis on prevention and keep people more healthy in the first place, which we have mused about since the 1970s, and avoid the crisis management approach to health care.

We have witnessed in recent weeks that some of the provinces are already on their way to tackling the health care crisis and the challenges to implement fundamental changes to bring about the needed health care reforms that will bring health care into the 21st century.

• (1240)

The premiers have said they are not waiting for Ottawa. They have stepped aside and are getting on with the job without Ottawa. The desire of the premiers is to say that they are going it alone. It is entirely understandable given the massive cuts that we have seen from the government throughout the 1990s and given the inflexibility, which is even worse, toward the provinces when any innovation came forward with respect to health care.

The Budget

The Liberal government has cumulatively cut \$25 billion from the CHST since it came to power. Some people would say it is because it did not have the money, but the government put \$100 billion into grants and contributions which amount to pet projects. It is not that the government did not have the money, but it did not have a vision or sense of priority on how to spend precious taxpayer dollars.

In the 1995 budget the finance minister announced massive unilateral cuts to the CHST. Billions of dollars were slashed from health care. The provinces were left holding the bag and that bag was almost empty. The effects of those cuts are still felt today in the long waiting lists, the obsolete medical equipment, the critical shortage of doctors, nurses and specialists.

In September 2000 the federal government had an agreement with the provinces in an effort to do some damage control, or was it just a calculated Liberal election play? We are only a year into the Liberal election cycle and the finance minister has nothing new to offer Canadians for health care.

The non-designated CHST cash transfers for the current fiscal year are \$500 million less than was offered in 1993 and 1994. It must be realized that since that time we have had an increase of 15% in inflation and an increase of 8% in population. That is not taking any of that into account. It is \$500 million lower since 1993. Surely the minister could have found \$500 million in the budget for the number one priority of Canadians.

The budget is sending a message to the provinces. At one time the federal and provincial governments shared the responsibility of health care in a 50:50 arrangement. Over 20 years the federal contribution has diminished to about 14%. In some provinces it is as low as 12%. Clearly health care is a low priority of the government.

A number of messages are being sent to health care by the government in this budget. The Standing Committee on Health has been working on regulations on reproductive technology, a bill the Liberal government has said is priority number one and which it is going to bring forward. We have been waiting for this legislation since 1993, yet there is not one nickel for a regulatory framework or body. This says to me that perhaps it is not the government's number one priority and maybe there is another agenda at play here.

I recently saw a quote by Thomas J. Courchene who said "When one puts this all together, the picture emerging in the 2001 budget represents the catalyst for the provinces to embark on rethinking and redesigning the health care system. In effect Ottawa has long lost its moral authority, as well as its financial leverage to remain a health care decision maker".

That is the biggest problem. The government has relinquished its claim of any moral high ground when it comes to protecting medicare and health care for Canadians.

When I was 15 years old I remember sitting across from my father who is not with us now. In one of those rare moments I asked him what was the most important thing in life. I remember his response as if it were today. He said "I guess if we do not have health, we do not have much". That rang very true then and it rings very true now.

For 20 years I have been fighting to protect medicare and health care. I remember the very first board I was elected to in the early

1980s. I got on that board to protect medicare and health care. For 20 years I have been fighting for this.

● (1245)

The budget shows the lack of priority in health care. I conclude that members of the government know how to play and to spin politics but they know nothing about how to lead a nation. The budget proves it in black and white.

Mr. Svend Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Madam Speaker, I listened with great interest to my colleague talking about how important it is to protect medicare and health care. In that light I want to ask the member if he has spoken up yet about one of the greatest threats to health care and medicare in this country, and that is the policies of Ralph Klein in Alberta, Mike Harris in Ontario and Gordon Campbell in British Columbia.

Why is it that the member and his party, while claiming to believe in medicare and health care, are silent on the major threats that we have seen, threats of privatization, two tier health care and the fact that Ralph Klein is now talking about private hospitals? I want to remind the hon. member that private hospitals are here to make money. They are not here to look after patients.

Lorne Calvert, the premier of Saskatchewan, is defending public health care. He said that we as New Democrats want every penny of money being put into the health care system to be put into quality health care and not into the pockets of shareholders of some multinational American health care company.

I ask the hon. member, why is it that his party has not spoken out? Why is it that members of his party have not been more critical of the new Minister of Health from Edmonton who in fact has said that she is quite prepared to consider the possibility of private hospitals in Alberta? When are they going to speak up for quality public health care in this country?

● (1250)

Mr. Rob Merrifield: Madam Speaker, the member has to understand that when it comes to protecting medicare and health care we do not have to look very far. We just have to look across the way. From every area in the country, from every premier, from every province, every voice that we want to really listen to will tell us that the health care system, the way it is now, is not sustainable. If we want to protect it, we had better be prepared to make some changes and be open enough in our thinking to understand that health care has to have some accountability in it. It is very important that takes place. It is very important to understand that just throwing more money at it is not the solution. We have to think a little broader and a little more open than that.

The Budget

The member mentioned Mr. Klein and what he is proposing with health care. We have to look a little further than saying he is just going to privatize it. I am not necessarily endorsing what he is doing 100%. However, I am certainly going to say that he is going in the right direction in saying that he is going to bring accountability by the users and the providers to the system. That is long overdue. It is so far beyond any thinking we have ever seen from this House.

Now there is an interesting flip-flop coming from the new Minister of Health. I certainly look forward to an opportunity to sit down and examine where she is coming from. I also applaud the co-operative approach with the provinces.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): May I humbly request that hon. members keep their questions and answers short in order to allow all of the members who showed an interest to ask the member a question in the five minutes that are allotted for questions and answers.

Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I start off my question by repeating verbatim what the member for Yellowhead just said. He said that just throwing money is not the solution.

I ask him what he thinks the solution is. He mentioned accountability and responsibility in the use of our dollars. I do not know where the member has been but I point out that the federal government has a responsibility to transfer moneys and tax points, which the premiers especially fail to recognize, as one method of supporting health care. The other is the Canada Health Act.

What is the member's solution? If he is saying that money is not the solution, what is the solution?

Mr. Rob Merrifield: Madam Speaker, I think I addressed that in my speech in a very clear way.

I am saying that leaving it the way it is, by just allowing it to drift, pulling the money out and holding the provinces in a straitjacket is not the solution. The solution is to bring more accountability to the users and the providers of the system. We should listen to some of the innovative things which are coming from our provincial counterparts who have the mandate to deliver health care.

To put the provinces in a straitjacket and pull the money out is not a solution. That is what we have seen happen with this government over the last decade. It had better stop or we will lose our health care system.

Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, according to recent statistics which I read in a Saskatchewan paper, 31,000 people are waiting for surgery. Doctors have said that under the present system many of them will die before they get relief. We cannot let this continue. Would the member care to comment on that?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): Unfortunately, time is against the member. Resuming debate, the hon. member for St. Albert.

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, a budget is brought down when the Minister of Finance has some new and fresh ideas, some new directions for the country and ideas on how he will keep our fiscal house in order. However this is

a nothing budget. It came, it went and we never really noticed what was going on.

In his budget the minister has made basically no changes at all other than throwing some money to the military, which we have been calling for since we came here in 1993. A billion dollars does not even start to make up for the shortfall the military should have to protect the country.

I have said many times that for a nation to be a nation it has be able to do two things: one, to collect its taxes, and the government knows how to do that in style; and two, we also have to defend our borders. With the state of our military we cannot defend our borders. We depend on our neighbour to the south to look after us and that is not good enough.

Our troops are leaving this week for Afghanistan. They will be wearing dark uniforms rather than uniforms designed for the desert. The Minister of National Defence has told us not to worry because they will be wearing dark uniforms which cannot be seen in the dark. That comment from the Minister of National Defence is an absurdity and an embarrassment for all Canadians. We cannot afford uniforms for our troops that will provide them with some camouflage throughout the day, but we should not worry because they will not be seen at night. What an embarrassment.

Our economy is getting a little shaky right now. We may be going into a recession. However the Minister of Finance did not cut any taxes. He did not cut the capital tax which is a tax on people who want to build economic prosperity in this country. A capital tax is the worst kind of tax imaginable because it has to be paid even if people do not make any money. How can that be? It is a courtesy of the Liberal government. We pay taxes even if we do not make any money.

The minister could have cut income tax, but there were no changes. He could have cut employment insurance. Why? Because there is a \$36 billion to \$40 billion surplus in that fund. It is a tax on unemployment. It is a tax on jobs. He is ripping off working people in Canada and is not apologizing for that. That kills jobs.

We need every job we can get right now. We are perhaps heading into a recession. If we are, why would he tax jobs out of existence? How can that be? It is absolutely beyond my comprehension to think that a minister would continue to tax jobs, employers and employees, to a tune of almost \$40 billion over the last five or six years, just because he thinks he needs the cash.

We have to get a message through to this Liberal government that it does not have any money except what it squeezes out of the pockets of the taxpayers until they squeak. We have to give taxpayers the opportunity to get this economy going. We have to give employers an opportunity to develop new investments and create opportunities for Canadians. Surely that is what it is all about.

Why do our American friends have unemployment rates 4% less than what they are here? Because the United States has a business friendly environment and Canada does not.

The Budget

There was no debt reduction included in the budget. The Liberals put us in debt but they are not talking about getting us out of debt. They hope there is a bit of surplus and, if there is, that amount will go toward debt reduction.

There was no real attempt by the government to cut waste mismanagement and lack of productivity. Money disappears wherever it has the whim to spend it.

• (1255)

The supplementary estimates tabled back in November, just before the budget came down, included \$113 million for an unworkable and unenforceable gun registration program. We are now up to about \$500 million to register the guns and we are not even close to being there. We know the system is not working. Why does the government not call it quits, cut its losses and save taxpayer money? That way the Minister of Finance might have some room to cut taxes.

It goes on to other things, such as \$7.3 million for the Romanow health commission. I guess I really do not mind that the government asked Roy Romanow to head the commission, although he is a socialist. We have been looking for some creativity on how to revamp the health care system, but we will not get it from people like Roy Romanow. However, he will get \$7.3 million for his commission. He will be a dollar over budget and six months late because the health care debate is now, not in November of this year when he will table his report. He will miss boat. What is the point? He will get \$7.3 million and all the decisions will be made by that time.

There is another \$6.8 million in administration costs for infrastructure programs. We are not talking about infrastructure. We are talking about administering the infrastructure program for \$6.8 million. How can it continue this way?

There is \$3.2 million in funding for pay equity hearings. I thought that pay equity problem, which cost taxpayers \$3.5 billion, was paid out several years ago. There must still be some little committee feverishly working away somewhere because it needs another \$3.2 million in funding to pay for its hearings.

Do not forget the \$2.5 million for Communications Canada, the government's propaganda wing. The waste and the lack of efficiency, productivity and accountability goes on and on.

Just this morning the Speaker announced the vacancies in the House since we last sat in December. One was the former minister of public works who had to leave the country in a hurry because of allegations of what he did while he was the minister. We cannot have that.

The newspapers this past week reported that the Access to Information Act had been shut down. Therefore, we have no access to information these days. We cannot get access to how the government is spending money. The government thinks that it has the divine right to govern, but it will wake up one day when the taxpayers and the citizens of the country say "Enough of this. Out of here". We cannot let this kind of attitude continue.

We had the billion dollar boondoggle over at HRDC. Billions of dollars were wasted or potentially wasted because there was no

documentation. We did not know why it was spending the money. It had verbal agreements on the backs of cigarette packages and all that kind of stuff. This is how the government is run. Then there was a big kerfuffle and the government asked the auditor general and others to investigate. Internal audits were done and we thought the whole thing was fixed.

An hon. member: And the ethics commissioner.

Mr. John Williams: And the ethics commissioner, too.

What did the auditor general say when she brought down her report this fall? She found that \$9 million of spending by Heritage Canada, a different department from HRDC, did not have proper documentation and files were missing.

What has changed? Unfortunately, the bad news is nothing has changed. The government continues to run this country out of its back pocket with no records, no accountability, no professionalism, and thinks it is doing a good job.

Remember the heating fuel rebate program. Money went to 1,600 prisoners and 7,500 people in graveyards, yet the Minister of Finance did not have an opportunity to cut taxes. Why not? Because of this type of stuff, and it goes on and on.

The public accounts committee report provides the real accountability and where we get the details of what is really going on.

For example, we paid \$9,000 to a prisoner because a correctional officer used unreasonable force to keep him from swallowing contraband. The officer was trying to save the guy's life and he got sued because he used unreasonable force. The officer put a choke hold on the prisoner, who was trying to poison himself, to make him throw up the drugs so he would not die. That is ludicrous.

• (1300)

This is why the Minister of Finance had no opportunity to cut taxes for law-abiding Canadians who just wanted to get on with their lives with the least intrusion by government. It is not happening and the sooner we get the government out of there, the better.

Mr. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, once again the figures of the Alliance members just do not add up.

They have asked us to cut taxes then they have given us a whole bunch of expenditures which they want us to make, but never once have they given us a list. The previous speaker had \$100 million in projects. I have asked Alliance speakers and members of the coalition before in debate to please give us lists. No one has given a list of projects that would add up to \$100 million which should not be funded.

The member continues to say there have been no cuts to EI or taxes. We have had the biggest tax cut in Canadian history of \$17 billion. Next year it will be \$20 billion. We have cut EI.

The Budget

The member said this was a nothing budget and no one knew what was in it. If he is going to debate the budget, he should know what is in it.

September 11th happened and all members of the House asked for expenditures. The budget contains \$7.7 billion for security and \$2 billion for strategic infrastructure.

An Alliance member just suggested that no one asked for it. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities and the Association of Yukon Communities asked for it. A majority of Canadians live in these cities. I am glad to have the Alliance on record as saying that no one has asked for it, and that they do not support infrastructure.

The budget contains \$1.1 billion for skills and learning, \$680 million for affordable housing, a 7% increase to granting councils, \$110 million for a national increase, money for aboriginal children and money for the environment.

I would ask the member to come up with a list of projects which we have spent funds on for which he would not spend the money. I would ask him to quit asking for more money for health care, agriculture and defence and at the same time ask us to cut taxes and the deficit. We have already had the greatest tax cuts in history.

• (1305)

Mr. John Williams: Madam Speaker, of course we have a list. There was: \$1.45 billion in heating fuel rebates, most of it to people who did not need it, such as renters and others who do not pay heating fuel bills; \$6.4 million for the Prime Minister's Team Canada mission to China; \$93,000 to settle mistakenly identified seed potatoes; and \$71,000 for cancellation projects for an APEC conference. I could go on and on and on.

How about \$45,000 for compensations for losses regarding the export of sheep to Mexico and \$14,000 to a hog farmer who made modifications to his barn based upon a government opinion that was wrong? There is big stuff as well. There was \$9 million at Heritage Canada and \$113 for gun control.

The list is virtually endless and that is the point. The waste, mismanagement and the lack of accountability are everywhere. There is no focus or vision. The Liberal government has no idea that taxpayer money has to be well spent and productively spent. That is the point the government cannot seem to get through its head.

Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will tell the hon. member for St. Albert what the point is. He is a seasoned member of parliament. He was here in 1993. He talked about embarrassment. He said his party came to the House asking for support for the military. How dare he say that. I challenge him to look in the records.

After the first budget, Ray Speaker, a member of the then Reform Party, stood in the House and said that we had not cut enough. I challenge the member to look that up in the record.

The member talked about taxing employers and employees. This government, year after year, has been reducing EI premiums. He knows this but I will remind him. In 1993 it was at \$3.30 per \$100. In 2002 it is \$2.20. That translates to over \$6 billion. We did what the corporate world asked us to do. It said if we lowered EI

premiums, it would hire. That is why between 1993 and most recently there have been over two million jobs created in Canada.

Mr. John Williams: Madam Speaker, the member talks about \$6 billion in cuts to EI but there is another \$40 billion that the government should have cut but did not.

The law said that the chief actuary determined the rate for EI premiums based upon his projection of how much was required. When he started to say that the fund was getting too big and that EI premiums would have to be cut aggressively, the government fired him. It did not want to hear what he had to say and that the decisions would be made by cabinet. It would be a political decision with nothing whatsoever to do with appropriateness. That is they type of thing we get from the Liberals and that is what has to stop.

Mr. Bryon Wilfert (Oak Ridges, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with my colleague from Scarborough Centre.

It is a pleasure to comment on the 2001 federal budget, a budget based on sound fiscal and economic management. This is the fifth balanced budget or better in a row, which is a first in 50 years.

Governing is about setting priorities and responding to pressing issues. I am delighted to say Canada will be the only G-7 nation to balance its books this year. Keeping the books in the black is critical. The budget does that, plus it delivers on our previous commitments. It is a balanced approach to Canadian needs.

I will comment specifically on the issues surrounding strategic investments. These are of particular interest to my riding of Oak Ridges. They reflect the needs of a fast growing community that wants a strong public health care system. My constituents want the system preserved and they support the five principles of the Canada Health Act.

In September 2000 the federal, provincial and territorial governments reached an historic agreement on an approach and action plan for renewing health care services and on support for increased assistance for early childhood development.

The 2001 budget confirms our support for federal funding of \$23.5 billion. The agreements are fully protected. This brings federal funding to an all time high, notwithstanding the current posturing of the provincial premiers who signed the agreement having assessed their needs and agreed to transfers that now reach \$34.5 billion a year.

The Budget

By 2005-06 the Canada Health and Social Transfer will have been increased by \$5.5 billion to \$21 billion. This will be a 35% increase over the 2000-01 levels. By then CHST transfers to the provinces and territories will reach \$40 billion.

Oak Ridges continues to grow significantly each year. The community of Richmond Hill has grown in the last three years from 116,000 to 143,000 people. Demands on local hospitals and services have reached an all time high. Federal support for medicare is critical to both new and long time residents. Federal support for health information systems and health research innovation is also important.

In Ontario last year the provincial government announced \$1.2 billion in new funding for health care. However it forgot to mention that \$1.1 billion of it was from federal transfers. Reducing emergency waiting room lineups and providing long term care needs and more equipment is possible with the transfers.

The provinces are responsible for the delivery of services. They must make health care a priority. The federal government has given them the tools to deliver. The Medical Equipment Fund provides provinces and territories funding of \$1 billion for the purchase and installation of medical and diagnostic equipment such as MRI machines, CAT scans, radiation therapy machines and other diagnostic and treatment equipment. The Health Transition Fund for Primary Care received an \$800 million boost over four years to support innovation and reforms in primary care for Canadians.

Clearly the system is not perfect. The government has established a commission on the future of health care in Canada headed by Roy Romanow. The commission will receive input from Canadians on the future of health care in Canada from a national perspective. As commissioner Romanow has stated, everything is on the table except the status quo. Residents of my riding support this federal initiative and welcome the opportunity for input.

In 1999 the federal government announced the creation of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. It contains 13 institutes which cross the full spectrum of health research. They include the Institute of Cancer Research; the Institute of Neurosciences, Mental Health and Addiction; and the Institute of Nutrition, Metabolism and Diabetes, to name a few. The institutes provide an innovative and integrated approach to health research. They provide clinical research, research on health systems and services, and biomedical research.

In the budget the Minister of Finance announced increased support for leading edge health care research. This will translate into economic benefits for Canadians through a commercialization strategy developed by the CHIR. The budget provides a \$75 million increase to the annual budget of the CHIR. This brings the total investment to over \$560 million, more than double what it was four years ago.

● (1310)

In a community with a highly educated workforce where a great deal of importance is attached to innovation and research, this news is very welcome. As a former educator I know skills, learning and research are essential to success in a global and knowledge based economy. Having a more educated and skilled labour force is critical

for productivity and enhanced competitiveness for our workers and businesses. Having held forums on skill development in my riding, I know my community supports the approach the government has taken of addressing the needs of educational institutions in the spirit of lifelong learning.

In the past the government has introduced the Canadian Opportunities Strategy, the Canadian Millennium Scholarship Foundation and the Canada Education Savings Grant programs. The Minister of Finance has continued to build on these important initiatives by providing additional investments such as \$24 million over two years to support sector councils, industry wide partnerships that will bring together employers, workers, unions and educators to assess future employment patterns, skill requirements and training practices; \$15 million a year to encourage the acquisition of trade skills by changing the provisions of EI so apprentices in approved programs are subject to only the two week period over the course of their training before they start receiving benefits; and over \$1 billion over three years to support skills, learning and research.

These are important policy statements by the government. They will position the country to progress through the decade by investing in Canadians, in literacy and education, and providing Canada with unlimited potential in the global village.

I was particularly pleased that the Minister of Finance responded to many of us on this side of the House by addressing the issue of the high cost of tools for apprentice vehicle mechanics. Providing tax assistance to allow apprentice vehicle mechanics to cope with their significant expenses for tools is something that needed to be addressed. Beginning this year these individuals will be able to deduct the cost of new tools for income tax purposes to the extent that the costs incurred in a year exceed \$1,000 and 5% of their apprentice income.

The \$10 million a year measure has been welcomed by the Canadian Vehicle Manufacturers Association among others. I have received calls not only from young people in my riding who are in the field and applaud the initiative. I have received calls from automobile dealers who indicate it is an important inducement to get more skilled apprentices into the trade.

Many adults pursue their education and receive government assistance to pay their tuition fees for basic education at primary and secondary levels. The budget addresses a problem whereby tuition assistance is included in income without any offsetting credits. I am pleased to say that the Minister of Finance has recognized this. In the budget he proposes to exempt from income tax any tuition assistance for adult basic education provided under certain government programs including EI. This demonstrates a commitment to upgrading education for adults and providing incentives to improve their skills.

The Budget

The Minister of Finance has also responded to the concerns of graduates who have difficulty managing their student debt. He has increased the number of individuals eligible for interest relief and provided debt reduction for individuals with extended financial difficulty. Students can claim a tax credit for interest paid on federal and provincial student loans.

As a former president of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities I am pleased to see the budget's support for infrastructure, particularly basic municipal infrastructure needs. The budget recognizes the need to support large strategic infrastructure projects such as urban transit, sewage treatment plants and highways. The establishment of the Strategic Infrastructure Foundation which commits a minimum of \$2 billion is significant in addressing infrastructure needs across Canada and helping make Canada competitive. In conjunction with provincial and municipal governments the foundation will provide cost sharing assistance to large infrastructure projects and encourage participation in private-public partnerships.

I have targeted only some areas in the budget of importance to my riding. However I would also acknowledge that the budget has been achieved without going into deficit.

• (1315)

[Translation]

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, BQ): Madam Speaker, before asking my Liberal colleague a question, I wish to make a few comments. I know him and I appreciate the personal efforts he has made. Since he was once the vice-president of the Union of Canadian Municipalities, I am sure he has not forgotten that municipalities come under provincial jurisdiction.

We admit that there are infrastructure needs. He also spoke of tax deductions for tuition fees and so forth. This is a roundabout way for the federal government to interfere in areas of provincial jurisdiction, in this case education. Naturally, if Quebec students benefit, we cannot object. However, the member must admit that education comes under provincial jurisdiction.

Would the member, who is an expert on municipalities, not agree that it would be smarter for the federal government to make provision in this budget for increased cash transfers to the provinces, which could use this money to take a more comprehensive approach to municipal infrastructures?

• (1320)

[English]

Mr. Bryon Wilfert: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question. The issue of infrastructure is one the government responded to in 1993 after the initial proposal from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities in 1983.

It is a program which has been supported by municipal governments across the country including the Union of Quebec municipalities. The UMQ has supported the program and indicated, along with the government of Quebec which has signed on to the proposal, that we need to deal with basic infrastructure in Canada.

We have about \$40 billion in infrastructure deficit, whether it be sewers, water or bridges. It is basic infrastructure that needs to be addressed. In the spirit of co-operative federalism and of coming

together it was clear that the federal government in conjunction with its provincial and municipal partners established the national infrastructure program.

In terms of transferring dollars, I would point out to my colleague and the House that when a program is municipally driven it is up to municipal governments to establish what their needs are in their jurisdictions. They put the needs forward and they are evaluated by provincial and federal authorities. It is important to note that in doing so we have partnerships of a one-third, one-third and one-third nature.

It is also important to note that it is municipally driven. Simply transferring moneys to provinces would therefore not be effective. A few years ago in British Columbia buses were suddenly showing up all over the place in cities across the province. The buses were not approved by the cities. We had to intervene. It is important that fiscal accountability and the principle of municipally driven projects be there by having all three play an important and significant role.

Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, I will ask the hon. member a question with respect to health care. He spent quite a bit of time talking about health care. I agree with him that it is a matter of considerable importance to Canadians.

Until the last poll health care was the first issue in Canadians' minds. It has now apparently given way to unemployment and the economy and has been superceded somewhat by concerns for security. However health care is still very important. The hon. member gave glowing reports of what the budget will do for health care.

The Liberals have been at the helm a little over eight years. Under the Liberals health care has eroded. It has become an issue of great concern. Under their watch the Liberals have seen it erode to the point where the premiers are taking unilateral action to fix it.

Why should we trust the government and what the budget is promising when it has not worked in the past nine years?

• (1325)

Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I was looking forward to coming back to the Chamber after recess. We had the budget just before recess and it gave us the opportunity as members and representatives to go back to our ridings and talk to our constituents about the budget and hear their views on various issues. I agree with the member for Elk Island who just said that every member here today has spoken or will be speaking about the health care system.

I too want to talk about the health care system and touch upon other issues. It has often been said that the past always affects the future. In order for us to stand here and talk about what is happening today, it is important to turn back the clock for a moment to 1993 when the Liberal government was given the mandate by Canadians to undertake to put the country back on its feet.

The Budget

Whether we like to talk about it or not, before we took office the country was almost broke. We had high deficits, almost \$43 billion; the debt was out of control; and unemployment was at 11.5% to 11.6%. Canadians as a whole were mentally and physically down. They did not know where to go or where to turn.

With our program review, not just the department of defence but every other department had to restructure, make adjustments and make some cuts. As I pointed out earlier to the member for St. Albert, when members of that party talked about supporting the military today, and always have been, I think it is a shame to hear some of their statements. As I said earlier, I challenge them to look at the records where their member, Ray Speaker, in the then Reform Party stood up and said that the government did not cut enough and that it should have cut more.

Today, eight years or so later, they have the audacity to stand up and say that the government needs to put more money into the military. We have and we have been doing so over the years. When I sat on that committee we looked at the payroll services, housing, et cetera, and we did it according to our ability to do so.

I want to get back to health care. Over the past little while I have heard repeatedly from my constituents that the health care issue is confusing. They have heard the premiers and the federal government say the same thing but they do not care. They just want it fixed, which is where I think we need to drive this debate.

However, in order to drive this debate and get some clear answers, we need to call a spade a spade. I will take this opportunity to again go back in time. When the National Forum on Health came to the Prime Minister and to the government about three years ago and said that they needed \$1.5 billion to shore up the health system, no questions were asked. The money was given right away.

The members opposite and members here will remember that about two years ago when the social contract was signed, the premiers were asking for about \$1.5 billion to \$2 billion. The Prime Minister invited them to come to Ottawa to sit down and talk. The government wanted accountability. Let me point out that not only did the premiers get what they wanted but they received much more money than they were asking. I and the whole country remembers when Premier Kline and Premier Harris stood up with the Prime Minister complimenting and thanking the government for the sudden new infusion of money to help resolve their problems.

However we did not stop there. We went beyond that. All we asked from the premiers at that time, as the premier of Saskatchewan said the other day, was that if \$10 was supposed to go into health care then the \$10 should go strictly to health care and nowhere else.

What did we do in our previous budget? In budget 2001, it was very important to reiterate to Canadians that the commitment we made in the previous budget, the \$23.4 billion that was going to health care, not only was committed but that we were already into the second phase of it. Not only did we do that but we added even more money to the Canadian Institute for Health Information and to the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. These moneys have already been going to the provinces.

What we in Ontario found was a discrepancy supposedly in the amount of money being transferred.

● (1330)

We now hear Premier Harris and his colleagues saying that Ontario does not get the money. What they failed to tell their constituents was that moneys were transferred in two ways: tax points and cash. We add the tax points, which are in essence cash, and the cash transfers.

We undertook a study to see how the moneys had grown over the years. In 1997-98 21.9% of total spending between cash and tax points was transferred. In 1998-99 a total of 22% was transferred to the province of Ontario. In 1999-2000 it grew again to 23.6%. In 2000-01 it went to 25.4%. In 2001-02, which is now projected, it will reach 26.9%. As we can see, every year it keeps going up and up and up.

Yes, we had to make changes, as the member for Yellowhead said earlier, but we had no choices. This country had to secure its economic sovereignty. We could not let this country go further below the line.

Today and over the past couple of years we have led the G-7 in economic growth and employment. As I mentioned to my colleague from St. Albert earlier, when employers came to us back in 1993-94 asking the government to lower the EI premiums, we did that year after year. We reduced it by over \$6 billion. He prefers to call it payroll taxes. I, as a former employer, call it contributions in order for us to have a sustained society and a health care system.

The people of Alberta pay a monthly health care premium. Now Premier Klein is talking about doubling that premium. We do not do that in Ontario.

Mr. John Williams: Because there is no money from the feds.

Mr. John Cannis: I challenge the member who said that there is no money from the feds to do what we did, which is get the figures. I would be glad to give him a copy of these figures.

The Budget

At the same time, I must point out what we have done in terms of employment. Members opposite talked about surpluses and where the money goes. Whether it goes in one pocket or the other, it really is the Canadian pocket for Canadians. I want to stand today and reassure not only my constituents, but each constituent out there no matter where they live in this great country, that we on the federal side are adamant that we do not want a two tier health system. We do not want an Americanization of our system or of our sovereignty. We do not want to have to say when we go to a hospital that we can afford this service but we cannot afford that service. I want to assure my constituents as well as each and every Canadian that, following the example given by the hon. member for Yellowhead, we, our children, our parents and future generations will have the opportunity to go to hospital or seek medical care without having to worry about jeopardizing our livelihood, our homes or whatever assets we have.

I want to get back to the aspect of tax reductions and other things we have done. In the previous budget we committed \$100 billion to tax reductions. Why did we do that? As the member for Oak Ridges said earlier, for the first time in 50 years we brought forward five balanced budgets and surpluses. For the first time we have reduced our debt by close to \$36 billion, which frees up just over \$2 billion, I believe, that we can now invest back into the country. Where have some of these investments gone? Let me point out the Canada millennium scholarship fund, which permits us to tell our youth that they can get a good education and the government will help them. It permits us to establish research chairs across the country.

I was at York University and I saw it happen. I also went to the sick kids hospital where I met a heart surgeon specialist who came from England to work at sick kids hospital because of the work that was being done and the reputation of the hospital, but more so because of the moneys that the federal government put into research. He asked me to thank the government, the Prime Minister, the finance minister and each and every member on the Liberal side when I returned to Ottawa. He was attracted to Canada for those reasons. I am proud to say that the sick kids hospital is at the pinnacle of any institution of that type.

• (1335)

We will continue to invest in health research so that one day our constituents will know that health care is not an issue that we will fool around with. It is there and it will continue to be there.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, while it was interesting to hear the hon. member say that he does not want to see a two tier health care system and that our health care system was not something to be fooled around with, it seems to me that those words ring very hollow when for the past eight years the Liberal government has done precisely that. It has allowed the system to be fooled around with and it has allowed political choices to be made to bring in a two tier system.

Why does the hon. member and his government continue to put out propoganda that leaves the impression that the decay, the slide and the move to privatize our health care system is somehow an inevitable thing? It is clearly a political choice. His government has stood by and allowed that to happen, even recently, with the Mazankowski reports, the comments made by the new Minister of Health and even at the recent premiers' meetings.

Why is the member and his government not making it clear that they will oppose privatization, that they will oppose user fees and that they will provide sufficient resources so that we can get back to the 50:50 sharing that we used to have which would give us a healthy health care system?

Mr. John Cannis: Madam Speaker, it would appear that the member, with the greatest of respect, might not have been listening or might have missed the point I was making in terms of the commitment and what we have done. I actually pointed out an example with respect to the province of Ontario in terms of money. I also gave examples of where the government is supporting the health system. The health system is not just the emergency ward. It is also health research, health sciences, equipment and whatnot.

The government, and I say this to my colleague over there with the greatest of respect, has put its money where its mouth is.

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC/DR): Madam Speaker, I listened with interest to the hon. member's comments about the budget and about his government's effectiveness in introducing the budget yet we have seen the dollar plummet. We have seen unemployment figures rise to 7.5%, with over 70,000 Canadians out of work, and that was before September 11. We know there is still a real problem with productivity in Canada. There is a real problem in health care, which he has touched on and which other members have spoken to today.

However I would like to bring to his attention a specific issue that is taking place in Canso, Nova Scotia, with respect to productivity and the need for strong federal government intervention, the need, in this instance, for the intervention of the federal Minister of Fisheries. In the town of Canso, a plant that is struggling. Three hundred people are about to lose their jobs if the plant leaves. The budget is the big picture.

The hon. member has a strong understanding of the role that municipalities play in issues like this; the mayor of Canso, Frank Fraser; the trawlermen's union; and the Canso Trawlerman's Association. There is a real need for the federal government to become involved in situations like this. There has to be a shift in policy vis-à-vis the government's decision on who gets quota and who uses quota. Direct involvement in fisheries policy is necessary.

I would ask the hon. member to encourage his government and his minister to make direct interventions. This is not a partisan issue. It is an issue of productivity and of persons in need of help from the government.

Does the hon. member support that type of intervention on issues such as this?

Mr. John Cannis: Madam Speaker, I know the member's comments were made constructively and my response will be made in a constructive way.

Had his party, which was the previous government, made those tough decisions prior to 1993, we would not be facing the situation we are in today. We took the plunge. We made the tough decisions on his party's behalf to address the problems that we are now trying to overcome.

The Budget

Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, the only thing I agreed with was when the member during his speech said that he had apologized. I think the government apologizing for the way it treated health care over the last eight years would be an appropriate response.

The government is standing on a soapbox of “We gave you lots of money so quit complaining”, but it not only did not give the money. It held the provinces in a straitjacket at the same time, which affected the system so badly that it is in crisis. It is absolutely shameful to see the government standing on a soapbox saying that it has given enough money.

The provinces have had a near death experience. They came through the desert and the government handed them a cup of water on the other side. They grasped it in 2000 but not one nickel hit the system until April of that year. That is inappropriate.

● (1340)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière.

It is with great pleasure that I rise today to take part in this ongoing debate on the budget. After the Christmas recess, and the meetings we had in January with a number of mayors, it seems to me that there is a major shortcoming in this budget. The government should do something about it while it still has the time and the money. I am talking about the money set aside for the infrastructure program.

When Quebec's finance minister, Mme Marois, announced that she would be making available additional funding for infrastructures, she proposed that the federal government follow suit, so as to increase projects' chances of success, because there are many projects.

In my riding, projects were announced, but many of them have yet to be accepted, not because Quebec has not done the required assessments, nor because they did not do so within the deadlines, as the Liberal member back home claims, but because, in fact, the federal government has not come up with its share to be added to the amount that Quebec has provided.

When it comes to the additional investment to give the green light to projects, to do much more, the federal government has not been up to the challenge. It decided to create a foundation instead. We do not know how this foundation will operate. Nor do we do not know how much money will be made available, because that depends on the federal surplus at year's end.

There are people living in municipalities that are in need of major projects over the next year, not frivolous projects. Take for example Rivière-Ouelle, Saint-André, and Saint-Alexandre de Kamouraska, where there are problems with water quality. We have seen that when government does not look after these matters, as was the case in Ontario, there can be major problems.

The Government of Quebec does want to improve the situation everywhere, particularly in the Lower St. Lawrence, where there are older towns with systems that need updating. The federal

government has yet to announce that it will help fund these programs. It is the same thing with Notre-Dame-du-Lac and Saint-Honoré de Témiscouata. There are essential projects that must be carried out in the short term.

Another example that demonstrates even better the extent to which the federal government's decision to not grant additional funding is creating problems is in the city of Rivière-du-Loup, which obtained the Canadian Games of la Francophonie, which will take place in August of 2002. The minister—who is now at immigration—made a commitment, along the lines that we need not worry, that there would be money for the games, that Ottawa would contribute.

Until now, there has been \$300,000 announced in investment for infrastructure for the Canadian Games of La Francophonie, which has been delivered, for a running track. Who paid for it? The Government of Quebec.

We cannot get the federal government to contribute funding for these games, which are its own idea. The Minister of Immigration is not able to deliver on his promise. Now that there is no money in the infrastructure program, the federal government has not contributed any additional funding. He cannot keep his promise, unless he can come up with a particular program to solve the problem.

All this could have been avoided if the government had not put political visibility ahead of effectiveness. It simply announced that it would match Quebec's contribution in order to generate other investments and help get other projects launched. Some of these projects could have got off the ground sooner.

Fortunately, Quebec has a program called Québec-Municipalités. Quebec is making a tremendous effort. It is going to invest 50% in projects, rather than 30%, as in the infrastructure program. The problem is that municipalities are being asked to come up with the other 50%, because the federal government has not set aside additional funding for these projects. I think that this is an important shortcoming in this budget.

While I am at it, I also want to talk about another unacceptable attitude on the part of the federal government. It announced a five year, \$500 million highway program, which works out to \$100 million a year. Divided by four, to reflect the population, this is almost \$25 million a year for Quebec.

● (1345)

Given our requirements, and the situation on Highway 185, which is the Trans Canada Highway—for which the federal government has particular responsibility—despite the 30 fatalities on that highway over the past three years, we cannot get any commitment from the federal government.

Quebec has kept to its part of the commitment. There has been a commitment of \$225 million; in the year to come, \$20 million will be spent and all projects are already under way.

If things continue as they are, however, we will end up with a highway on which part of the work has been done, because Quebec has met its obligations, and another section where nothing has been done, because the federal government has not made any investment, despite the promise made by the Prime Minister himself during last year's election campaign that this highway would be upgraded.

The Budget

The economy is certainly at stake but the primary concern is safety. Among the accidents that have occurred on this stretch of road, there was one terrible one over the Christmas holidays which took eight lives.

Considerable pressure is building from the young people of New Brunswick and Quebec, and from the elected representatives. All are calling upon the federal government to decide to make an investment. They are calling for a meeting with the federal Minister of Transport in order to obtain his guarantee of this.

There must be some action on this. Once again, what lies behind the problem is that the Minister of Finance has tightened his purse strings, preferring to put money into security. Not that we deny the appropriateness of that. It is not true, however, that it must be done at the expense of other needs. Thirty highway fatalities in three years is a lot. In a comparison with other sectors of activity, I think federal funding is necessary and it is absolutely necessary for the work to be done.

In concluding, I would like to address the ongoing scandal of employment insurance, one that continues in this budget.

Remember Bill C-2. The Bloc Quebecois voted against it, because it did give the government the right to set the UI contribution rate for the next two years.

The scandal is not over yet, because two weeks ago I asked for a copy of the report that the chief actuary has been producing for years, and in which he mentions the contribution rate that would be appropriate for the coming year, based on the reserves. The first reply given to me was, and I quote "It would appear, however, that no report was published in November by the chief actuary at Human Resources Development".

So, in addition to appropriating the right to spend that money for purposes other than those for which it was collected, that is to cover general expenditures as opposed to exclusive unemployment insurance purposes, the federal government went so far as to legalize its action. And now it is trying to gag those who are in a position to provide advice on these matters. This is a huge scandal.

Indeed, on January 18, I received confirmation that no report had been published. Worse still, I was informed a few days later that a mistake had been made. The letter was signed by the Deputy Minister at the Department of Human Resources Development. It was a supplementary letter, which said "It was brought to my attention that you were given an incomplete answer". It went on to say "We apologize for misleading you". But nowhere did the letter say that a report on unemployment insurance would be prepared by the chief actuary.

It is critical that this individual come to testify before the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development. Indeed, it is scandalous that, this year again, while 3,500 people in my region will see their UI benefits run out and will have to go through the spring gap, at the same time, during an economic recession, there will still be between \$4 billion and \$5 billion in surpluses. This is totally unacceptable.

And I am sure that the Minister of Finance, whether it is as Minister of Finance or as Prime Minister, if he ever holds that

position, will have to assume responsibility for that. And we will make sure that no one ever forgets that the surpluses and the deficit reductions were achieved at the expense of the unemployed, of those who needed that money the most, of those who contributed to the unemployment insurance program, while the government used their money to protect people who were better off.

This government must change its budget as soon as possible, otherwise it will be judged very harshly.

• (1350)

Mr. Svend Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the hon. member from the Bloc Quebecois regarding the issue of sovereignty and in particular Canada's national sovereignty.

The Bloc Quebecois and the leader of the Bloc Quebecois have advocated for a long time, and more recently in Mexico, for a common currency, a common dollar, which is to say the U.S. dollar, because I can assure you that the Americans will not accept the Canadian dollar. So, the Bloc Quebecois is advocating that Canada adopt the U.S. dollar and U.S. monetary policy.

My question is for my colleague, for whom I have a great deal of respect. Given his comments on the importance of sovereignty, particularly in the areas of economics and monetary policy, how can he advocate completely yielding our monetary sovereignty by adopting the U.S. dollar?

Mr. Paul Crête: Madam Speaker, first, I would like to say that the current situation was not caused by a common currency. It was caused by the way this government has managed Canada. The result is that we have a dollar that is worth only 60 cents.

I am 47 years old, and I remember when René Lévesque was laughed at because they said the dollar would be worth 70 cents if Quebec became sovereign. Now the Prime Minister's dollar has reached 61 cents and the situation is not improving.

With respect to the issue of the dollar and the common currency, I want to correct the member, what the Bloc Quebecois said was that it would be appropriate and responsible for the government to begin a study on the subject as soon as possible. This is what people who are knowledgeable on the issue of money are saying, people like Laurent Beaudoin, the president of Bombardier, and Paul Tellier, the president of Canadian National, for example. People from my riding who do business with the U.S. and have significant exports are tired of paying a lot for equipment, which affects their productivity.

We are not saying that we need to have a U.S. dollar tomorrow. When things are done in a hurry, we end up with a result like what happened in Argentina. But we want the government to follow up on our idea of an institute of the Americas on currency, and we want a rational approach on this issue.

Canada's sovereignty has nothing to do with the Queen's face. This is not where the solution lies. It lies—we sovereignists are open to the world—on a currency for all the Americas that would allow everyone to contribute to achieve a better balance.

An hon. member: Like the Euro.

The Budget

Mr. Paul Crête: There are steps to be followed. What they did in Europe was not achieved immediately. We must think ahead. If we do not think about it, the result will be that, at the rate things are going, by the time this Prime Minister leaves office, our dollar, which is currently at 61 cents U.S., will be worth 50 or 55 cents. Before this happens, it might be preferable for the Mexicans, the Canadians and the Americans to get together, and then all the countries of the Americas, to try to find an appropriate solution. In any case, the strength of the United States is reflected in the U.S. dollar and this has an impact on all the other economies.

It is for these reasons that such a debate must take place. It would be a good thing, both for Canada and for Quebec, which would be a sovereign state, to have a common currency for the Americas.

[*English*]

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC/DR): Madam Speaker, I have a question for my colleague in the Bloc. It deals again with an issue that is very important to the Canadian budget: the recent breakdown in negotiations between the Government of Canada and the European Free Trade Association over the issue of shipbuilding.

The hon. member will know that the anticipated removal of the 25% tariff will have a devastating impact on our shipbuilding industry. Navigational architecture, service companies, vessel operations, and the offshore oil and gas industry are to take a huge body blow if Canada continues and enters into this agreement.

The Canadian government will be quick to say that it brought in a \$30 million aid package last year to assist. There was some recognition at that time that there was difficulty in the shipbuilding industry, but a removal of the 25% tariff will absolutely negate that intervention by the federal government recently.

The 25% tariff would remain in effect for the first five years and be gradually reduced until there was no such protection for the Canadian shipbuilding industry.

It has been reported that in fact Canada currently imports approximately \$6 billion worth of manufactured goods from the ETFA per year and yet we export only \$1.4 billion. There is hardly reciprocity in terms of the benefits to Canada and to the productivity of the shipbuilding industry.

It is not just a maritime issue. It is not just the Atlantic provinces that will be affected. Certainly the member's province of Quebec would be devastated as well because of the importance.

• (1355)

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): There is no time left for an answer. I have already told the House twice that if members wish to ask a question, they may do so, but they must not take advantage of the opportunity to make a speech. If there is unanimous consent of the House for the member to reply, I will allow it. Is there unanimous consent to allow the member to reply to the question?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, BQ): Madam Speaker, it is with pleasure that I rise to take part in this debate on the budget. As luck would have it, the question asked by the Progressive Conservative member has to do with shipbuilding. It so happens that what is still the largest shipyard in the Maritimes is located in my riding, the one in St. John, New Brunswick, having closed.

The member is absolutely right that the budget says little, practically nothing, about shipbuilding. Indeed, I wonder if the fact that there was nothing in this budget to help Canada's shipbuilding industry was not one of the reasons that the Minister of Industry stepped down.

My colleague is right to be critical of the infamous customs tariff—which increasingly keeps coming up—when we know that, right now, when U.S. companies come to Canada, they are exempt from the 25% tariff, while Canadian shipyards cannot build ships with materials from the United States. This is a double standard and I personally have been speaking out against it for a long time. Unfortunately, with this budget, it is not going to go away.

What, as my colleague asks, is even more scandalous? It is the federal government's laxity as far as shipbuilding is concerned. It is still possible, and even encouraged by one Canadian shipowner, to purchase vessels constructed elsewhere, particularly in the communist countries, which have their own shipbuilding industries and do not pay taxes to their government as other businesses do. Some shipowners take advantage of this situation. They purchase these ships as soon as they are built, and operate them under foreign flags, thus exempting them from taxes.

Worse still, these are often holding companies, the profits of which are placed in tax havens around the world, of which there are quite a few, while any losses are left in Canadian companies as one more tax deduction. This is the situation at the present time in the shipbuilding and shipping fields, which are connected to each other.

Canada has three great oceans: the Pacific to the west, the Atlantic to the east, the Arctic to the north. The hon. member has mentioned offshore oil. As we know, there is enormous potential wealth there to be developed one day. The situation I am bemoaning now also applies to the Arctic, yet Canada is doing nothing about it.

We have the longest inland waterway in the world, yet at Lévis, St. John's, Halifax and everywhere else, we watch the ships pass us by. I do not see the Minister for International Trade doing anything to change any part of the free trade agreement with the United States. We know that shipbuilding and shipping are not covered by NAFTA, yet the Americans are being allowed to do whatever they want, and nothing is done about it here.

Meanwhile, people are out of work, people who have paid into employment insurance but were unable to work long enough to be eligible for it. This is inconceivable.

Excuse me, Mr. Speaker, for losing my temper, but the question from my Conservative colleague reminds me of what I said in my first speech. I think about the number of people in my riding who are out of work at this time, the number of unemployed in his region, in a number of regions—

•(1400)

The Speaker: Order, please. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member but we must proceed to statements by members.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

HEATH MACQUARRIE

Mr. Shawn Murphy (Hillsborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Heath Macquarrie, a long serving member of the House and the Senate, who died on January 2 of this year.

Heath's parliamentary career spanned five decades as he served uninterrupted terms as member of parliament for the Queens—Hillsborough riding from 1957 to 1979 and then as senator from 1979 until his retirement in 1994.

During his parliamentary career he was chair of the standing committee which presided over the enactment of the new elections act. He represented Canada as a delegate to the United Nations General Assembly and acted as parliamentary secretary to the secretary of state for external affairs.

He had a keen interest, deep knowledge and understanding of international affairs, and specifically Middle East politics. He was the ultimate politician. He understood his constituency, he communicated with his constituents, he was compassionate, he was witty, and he was charming.

As the current member of parliament for the riding Heath Macquarrie represented, I acknowledge his dedication to public life and extend my condolences to his family and many friends.

* * *

IRWIN STEWART

Mr. Paul Forseth (New Westminster—Coquitlam—Burnaby, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I extend congratulations to Dr. Irwin Stewart who was recently awarded the Order of Canada. He is a well known and highly respected member of the New Westminster community. He has contributed to the well-being of British Columbians and many throughout the world.

For more than 30 years Dr. Stewart helped deaf children, bringing travelling clinics to remote areas of British Columbia and organizing free clinics and surgical training in developing countries. He has been honoured for his clinical research on childhood deafness and was named professor emeritus at the University of British Columbia. He has occupied leadership roles in several professional associations and has served on multiple federal-provincial task forces.

Dr. Stewart continues to guide numerous health care projects worldwide. He is indeed a great Canadian. I am proud to give him honour this day.

* * *

LITERACY

Ms. Jean Augustine (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, January 27 was Family Literacy Day. Literacy skills of reading,

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writing and numeracy have a strong influence on individual growth and development and the ability to participate successfully in all areas of society.

The Government of Canada's National Literacy Secretariat promotes family literacy to encourage lifelong learning among children and to offer support and encouragement to parents, grandparents and guardians who wish to upgrade their own reading skills. Family literacy programs are offered at many sites across Canada from bookbags for parents to activities encouraging parent-child shared reading and writing.

Let us continue to support Canadian families to give our children the gift of reading.

* * *

CANADIAN COAST GUARD

Mr. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour—Petitcodiac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today the Canadian Coast Guard is celebrating its 40th anniversary. I wish to thank the new Minister of Fisheries and Oceans for marking this occasion. The coast guard has made a significant contribution to marine safety and the protection of the environment.

[*Translation*]

I congratulate the men and women of the coast guard for the extraordinary work they are doing for Canada.

[*English*]

Many of the symbols that are taken for granted by mariners and fishermen are the result of the activities of the Canadian Coast Guard. Lighthouses and buoys mark hazards to avoid, ice breakers facilitate international trade, and the great efforts of the coast guard in search and rescue have saved many lives.

Let us congratulate the Canadian Coast Guard on its 40th anniversary.

* * *

[*Translation*]

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Guy St-Julien (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the last two years have been very hard on the mining sector in Abitibi, James Bay, Nunavik and Témiscamingue because of the drop in the price of gold and metals, and a sharp decline in exploration.

A Fraser Institute study of 162 international companies ranks Quebec and Ontario the most attractive of 45 mining regions. As for investment, Quebec wins hands down in the "geological potential" category, with a perfect score of 100.

Quebec and Canada are a sure value, and the federal Department of Natural Resources should visit the mining regions of northern Quebec to hear what the mining industry has to say about getting this sector back up and running.

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•(1405)

[English]

WILLARD ESTEY

Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, Canada lost a great man last week with the passing of Justice Willard Estey.

The former chief justice of the supreme court was well respected and admired by all those who knew him. He was a remarkable straight shooter. His speech was laced with quips, remarkable insights and occasional comic relief. During his life he served in many different capacities besides the role of chief justice. He served on many commissions including chairman of Hockey Canada.

I first became acquainted with the chief justice when he chaired the grain transportation commission which recommended a more market-driven grain handling system. After he presented his findings to the committee I asked him if he could be wrong about his recommendations. He replied “Sure I could be wrong, but my chances of being wrong are about one per cent”.

The Liberal government rejected his recommendations, however farmers and farm lobby groups are still fighting to have his recommendations implemented. It is my hope that they will be adopted, adding one more significant contribution to the legacy of Justice Willard Estey.

* * *

PETER GZOWSKI

Ms. Sarmite Bulte (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I take this occasion to pay a special tribute to a great Canadian, Peter Gzowski. Mr. Gzowski was known as an author, a columnist, a champion of literacy and a broadcaster. He became one of Canada's best known and best loved broadcasters as the host of CBC Radio's *Morningside*.

[Translation]

His love for Canada was a major factor in uniting the people of this land.

Mr. Gzowski had a special place in his heart for Canada. This was evident in the way he spoke with his guests and listened to what they had to say.

[English]

In 1999 he was invested as a Companion of the Order of Canada. We will remember him as an outstanding Canadian.

On behalf of all citizens I express my sincere condolences to the family and friends of Mr. Peter Gzowski.

* * *

[Translation]

FAMILY LITERACY DAY

Ms. Monique Guay (Laurentides, BQ): Mr. Speaker, since 1999, January 27 has been set aside as Family Literacy Day in order to emphasize the importance and the benefits for children of reading as a family.

There are many settings well suited to the development of children's ability to read and write. But the family unit is one of the best places for stimulating their interest in these skills.

According to the most recent International Adult Literacy Survey, 10% of Canadians between the ages of 16 and 25 are unable to understand and to use the information in commonly used material, such as employment applications, pay forms and transportation schedules.

According to the Fondation québécoise pour l'alphabétisation, the phenomenon of illiteracy is ill-defined and poorly understood but can most certainly not be denied.

The federal government must restore Quebec's funding in this area so that it may continue its struggle.

* * *

[English]

PETER GZOWSKI

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Peter Gzowski was known throughout Canada as a supremely Canadian journalist and author. His career in broadcasting and his books touched millions and helped shape modern Canada. He was also widely known as a major supporter of national causes, notably literacy.

However in Peterborough he was also known as an effective and caring chancellor of Trent University. He was a hands-on chancellor who took a very personal interest in the university, particularly in its students.

Within the Trent community and in the territories his special interest in the north was particularly well known and admired. He saw the north as a very special place in and for Canada. He was working on a book about the north when he died.

With Peter Gzowski's passing we lose a great and empathetic Canadian. On behalf of all members and the people of Peterborough I send condolences to Peter's family.

* * *

PETER GZOWSKI

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to Peter Gzowski. For 15 years Peter Gzowski was the much loved host of CBC Radio's *Morningside*. He was the author of over 16 books about Canada for Canadians.

Political leaders across the country struggle every day with the challenge of identifying and nurturing a distinctly Canadian identity. Peter Gzowski seemed to be able to effortlessly capture this elusive Canadian character for us every morning on CBC Radio *Morningside*.

He found Canada and the Canadian spirit in community hockey rinks that dot the Canadian landscape, on the family farm, in the fishing trawler and among the artists, authors and entrepreneurs who make up our great country.

He gently brought his audience along with him on his never ending journey of discovery. He was once asked why he rarely travelled abroad to which he answered, "There is enough to experience here in Canada".

On behalf of Her Majesty's loyal opposition I pass along my condolences to his family and friends.

* * *

• (1410)

PETER GZOWSKI

Mr. Janko Perić (Cambridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week Canada lost a broadcast legend and writer, an advocate for literacy and former resident of my riding of Cambridge.

For 50 years Peter Gzowski explored every major event and subject that impacted on who we are as a people. He gave us a sense of pride in our country and took into account its geography and diversity.

Peter Gzowski grew up in the town of Galt and spent many days in the countryside exploring local creeks and biking trails. In one of his books he described the Waterloo region as "a place of people and memories, an anchor against the storms of change".

This trusted down-to-earth broadcaster with an unforgettable voice and gentle approach won over listeners across this great land. He will be missed by all.

* * *

PETER GZOWSKI

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I join with all members in honouring a great Canadian, Peter Gzowski.

Host of CBC's *This Country in the Morning* and *Morningside* for 15 years, Peter interviewed thousands of Canadians on our public broadcaster and connected millions of others with his warm, quirky, rolling narrative about this vast land and its people.

Just as surely as the railway, Gzowski's probing questions and conversations crossed the miles and held us all in the moment, in our cars and in our kitchens, fixed in our own spaces but imagining the spaces of others and being the richer for it.

Peter Gzowski grew up in a time when there was a passion and a swelling pride in being Canadian, in being concerned and connected with one another, at a time when Canada was about much more than regional differences, corporate carve-outs and the bottom line.

If we are to honour the memory of this gentle and generous man, we must work to rebuild that kind of bright, hopeful country, so that out of our precious northern earth will spring more people who, like Peter Gzowski, truly do love this country in the morning.

* * *

[Translation]

FREE TRADE AREA OF THE AMERICAS

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last weekend, more than 600 people took part in the Bloc

S. O. 31

Quebecois' symposium on the free trade area of the Americas, entitled "Quebec: Partner of the Americas".

Presenters from Quebec, the U.S. and Mexico as well as a series of workshops allowed participants the opportunity to debate issues related to globalization, the future of our continent and the creation of a free trade area of the Americas.

The symposium confirmed the fact that the nation state still has a role to play in the development of globalization. Quebec intends to make the most of an evolving continent, but in order to do so, it must take its place at the table among sovereign states.

The federal government, however, refuses to have any real debate. Witness its lukewarm response, even cold shoulder, when it comes to the idea of setting up a development fund for the Americas, a monetary institute, a debate on common currency, and so forth.

The Bloc Quebecois has decided to pursue its mission to better define its role in the globalization process.

* * *

[English]

PETER GZOWSKI

Mr. John McKay (Scarborough East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I, like other members, rise to honour Peter Gzowski. I call him a friend even though I never met him; he was, however, in my home and in my car for years. He made me late for work a lot of times. I was one of those parking lot Canadians sitting in my car, late for an appointment, listening to Peter and Camp, Kierans and Lewis on Friday mornings. It was a ritual. I so enjoyed their lively debates, their level of civility and their crisp interchange of ideas.

Peter brought parts of Canada to me that I had never visited and he treated the Inuit polar bear hunter with the same respect as the Prime Minister.

His probing questions did not seem to be intrusive. He let truth speak, and that was enough. He was rarely judgmental and he had no apparent axe to grind, but he felt passionate about certain issues and we could feel that passion through the radio.

He was the quintessential Canadian, one we could all aspire to being, one with understated brilliance, passionate at times, and with an enormous love for this country. I will miss him.

* * *

• (1415)

ELLEN FAIRCLOUGH

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC/DR): Mr. Speaker, I know that the House does not normally note birthdays, however, today in Hamilton the Right Hon. Ellen Fairclough celebrates her 97th birthday.

She was sworn to the privy council on June 21, 1957, as a member of the Diefenbaker government and thus became the first woman in our history to serve as a minister in the cabinet of Canada. In these times when equality is our watchword, it is worth remembering how long it took for a woman to be named a minister in the federal government.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]*

Ellen Fairclough was first elected in a by-election in May 1950. She was a great woman who was ahead of her time. More than fifty years ago, while in opposition, she introduced a bill to ensure equal pay for work of equal value. Subsequently, as minister, she enacted the regulations which, for all practical purposes, virtually eliminated racial discrimination from Canada's immigration policy.

[English]

Never once, in her mind or in her conduct, was there any doubt about being equal, nor that all others should be treated as her equal. I think the House would want to wish Ellen Fairclough well and to thank her for her life and her example.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

*[English]***THE ECONOMY**

Mr. John Reynolds (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, last week the Minister of Finance said that over time "currencies reflect economic conditions". Over the time since the government came to power, the Canadian dollar has lost almost 20% of its value.

Does the Prime Minister think the markets are right in their long term lack of confidence in the Canadian economy?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think the markets should look at the performance of the Canadian economy.

An hon. member: They are.

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien: Yes, and when they look at it and compare Canada with the rest of the world, the Canadian dollar has done better in relation to the American dollar than probably any other currency in the world. The problem is that people are using the American dollar as a currency of reserve, but the Canadian economy is performing extremely well. We have had no deficits in the last five years. We have a huge trade surplus. We have a huge balance of payments surplus. I think the market should look at these realities.

Mr. John Reynolds (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the traders are looking at the markets. The peso has done better than the Canadian dollar.

The biggest cause of the dollar's decline is the government's policies of high taxes and lagging productivity.

Last week the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance tried talking up the Canadian dollar, but talk is cheap. What action will the government take to boost the dollar by increasing productivity and lowering taxes?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, obviously the solutions that the Alliance would purport come out in the preamble of the question. The reason that the peso has in fact risen is that its interest rates are close to 16%. Is that what the hon. member is recommending?

Mr. John Reynolds (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the government, including the Minister of Finance, huffs and puffs but the dollar keeps blowing down.

The Canadian dollar has dropped 20% because taxes are too high, government spending is out of control in the last budget, and productivity is too low.

When will the Canadian public see some action, not just words, to defend the value of our currency?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member asks for action. The fact is that last year the Canadian government cut the national debt by \$17 billion. We have had the largest drop in the debt to GDP ratio of any industrial country. That is action. We have brought in the largest tax cuts in the country's history. That is action. Our current account surplus is up. Our inflation is low. The fact is that our exports are up. The fact is that the country is moving and it is about time that the markets begin to recognize what this country has done.

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the highest tax burden in the G-7 and the second highest debt burden in the G-7: that is the kind of action we do not need.

When the Prime Minister was in opposition he explicitly called for a weak dollar policy. As Prime Minister he has repeatedly praised a weak loonie as helpful to the Canadian economy.

Now he has what he has asked for. The currency has lost 20% of its value under his watch.

Is the Prime Minister pleased that his low dollar, weak loonie policy has worked so well?

• (1420)

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week the Prime Minister was unequivocal in his position on the Canadian dollar, as was the Governor of the Bank of Canada, as was I.

It would be very helpful in terms of perception of the Canadian dollar's relationship to the Canadian economy if in fact the official opposition were not to exaggerate, not to misrepresent the facts, but basically to state them so that the rest of the world understands that this country stands firm behind its currency.

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is everyone's fault but his. He blames the market. He passes the buck instead of taking responsibility. The dollar has not lost value against just the U.S. greenback, but against the yen, the pound, the franc and the Mexican peso.

When will the finance minister stop passing the buck and finally take responsibility by bringing in the kind of pro-competition, pro-productivity policies, like lower taxes and lower debt, which will finally bring some relief to our dollar and our standard of living?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that we should debate the dollar in this House is perfectly understandable, but the official opposition has the responsibility to basically lay the real facts on the table.

Oral Questions

What the hon. member has said is totally incorrect. The dollar has strengthened against the euro. The dollar has strengthened against the pound. The dollar has strengthened against the krona. The fact is, the dollar has not strengthened against the peso, but I go back to it. Is it 16% interest rates? Is that the Alliance's solution?

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[*Translation*]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Canadian soldiers will be dispatched to Afghanistan with the mission of capturing the al-Qaeda terrorists and Taliban who are still at large. Since they will eventually be taking prisoners, we need to know right now what treatment they will receive.

Is Canada going to agree to hand the captured suspects over to the U.S. authorities, or will it ensure that the Geneva convention relating to the treatment of prisoners is respected?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada's position on this is clear: Canadian laws must be respected by our troops in Afghanistan, and Canada must respect the Geneva convention.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in November, the Deputy Prime Minister stated that "the U.S. has first right to judge" those responsible for the attacks of September 11. President Bush keeps saying that the perpetrators will be tried before American military courts.

Since the attacks of September 11 were perpetrated against the entire international community, as the Prime Minister acknowledged at the beginning of this crisis, is the government now going to pressure the United States to bring the prisoners being held at Guantanamo before an international criminal court rather than an American military one?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since the crimes committed on September 11 took place on American territory, U.S. law must apply. When a crime is committed in a country, it is up to the government of that country to decide on the kind of trial those responsible for these wrongful acts on its territory will have.

Ms. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in a way, the Prime Minister is refusing to answer. In fact, it can be said that his position is more and more patterned on the one of the United States, while the new Minister of Foreign Affairs promised us a more independent position.

Can the Minister of Foreign Affairs tell us now what position his government will have regarding the prisoners that our troops capture?

Mr. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the Prime Minister said very clearly, Canada has both an obligation to respect international law and the intention of doing so. The reputation of our troops has always been built on such respect and we will comply with these standards.

This being said, it must be recognized that the United States also comply with international rules. I spoke to Mr. Powell and we consulted our British allies and the Red Cross. Everyone agrees that the prisoners are being treated according to the humanitarian

standards under international law, and we will insist that they continue to be in the future.

• (1425)

Ms. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the fact that the U.S. position is recognized as being clear and as respecting the Geneva principles is certainly very recent, because it was the object of a dispute even in the United States, between Colin Powell and the rest of the U.S. administration.

Will the Minister of Foreign Affairs fight to ensure that these prisoners are protected under the Geneva convention and are heard by an international criminal tribunal?

Mr. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will fight to ensure that prisoners are treated according to the standards provided under international law. As the Prime Minister clearly said, that war was begun by terrorists. It is up to the Americans to judge these terrorists in accordance with the standards of the American law and system.

I must say that we made it clear to our U.S. allies that while we want to comply with international law, we also respect the American law, which is very supportive of the protection of human rights.

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[*English*]

HEALTH

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is time that the health minister understood that for profit medicine is the greatest threat to high quality public health care. Let us not forget that the health minister ignored the crisis in her own backyard.

Time is a luxury we cannot afford, nor can we afford to spend hard earned tax dollars to line the pockets of profit seeking health corporations.

Could the health minister explain why profiting from people's sickness is okay by her?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will take this question because it is a complete misrepresentation of the policy and what the minister and this government are doing. Last week all the first ministers recognized that the five conditions of medicare are there to stay. It is a big victory for the policy of this government.

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is also time the government understood that in a health budget we can spend either \$10 out of \$10 on patient care, or we can spend \$8 on patient care and \$2 on corporate profits and more bureaucracy.

When Ralph Klein plowed ahead with his for profit health care, the Minister of Health from Alberta remained silent, dumb as an oyster, as we say in Nova Scotia. What will it take for the government and the minister to understand that creaming off 10% or 20% of health care dollars for private profit will bankrupt our public health care system?

Oral Questions

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the Prime Minister has just indicated, all Canadians should be heartened by our premiers' and territorial leaders' renewed commitment to the five principles of the Canada Health Act.

I would hope that the hon. leader of the fourth party is not suggesting to Canadians that our health care system is not in need of renewal.

I think we have all agreed. The premiers and the Prime Minister signed an accord in September 2000 that spoke to Canadians' desire to see a renewed health care system. Let me reassure all Canadians that I, as health minister, and this government are committed to working with our provincial colleagues to renew that system for all Canadians.

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CROWN CORPORATIONS

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC/DR): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister responsible for crown corporations.

We know that the Prime Minister intervened in the Business Development Bank. We know the tainted ambassador designate to Denmark intervened in the Canada Lands Company. Can the minister tell the House how many other ministers of the government intervened in the work of crown corporations?

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Infrastructure and Crown Corporations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the question which the hon. member is really trying to ask is, what are the norms of governance that should exist with respect to crown corporations for ministers who are responsible?

We know that members of many parties frequently write to ministers asking them to intervene with crown corporations. What we need to have perhaps is a review of the rules that deal with that. That in fact is what we are proposing to do. Once we have agreed on whether new rules are needed, we will make sure that the member knows all about it.

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● (1430)

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC/DR): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister and is in connection with his friend, Mr. Gagliano.

Will the Prime Minister agree to defer Mr. Gagliano's assumption of his ambassadorial duties until his qualifications are reviewed by the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, and will he guarantee that, if Mr. Gagliano does go to Denmark, he will have a return ticket in order to appear before a parliamentary committee to explain why a crown agency reporting to him has been forced to hire his Liberal cronies?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would simply like to say that I have before me the names of people appointed by the former Minister of External Affairs who never appeared before a House committee, the likes of Lucien Bouchard, David MacDonald, Frederik Eaton, Don Camerson, Tom McMillan,

Norman Spector, Pat MacAdam, Ian MacDonald and a number of others.

[English]

I think the member should be the last one to ask that type of question.

* * *

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the government ripped billions from health care in the 1990s and then watched it drift into crisis. It held the provinces in a straitjacket with no way for them to escape. Now what we see is a flip-flop in health care from the minister.

Is this deathbed conversion genuine or is the government just playing politics with health care again?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government has remained steadfast over the years to its commitment to the five principles of the Canada Health Act.

The hon. member talks about financing of the health care system. Let me remind the hon. member that it was only in September last year that the Prime Minister, premiers and territorial leaders agreed to a significant infusion of new dollars into our health care system. There is \$21 billion in new dollars in CHST funding over five years, an additional \$2.3 billion of new money for medical equipment, health information and primary health care renewal. It is clear that the government has put its money where its mouth is in terms—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Yellowhead.

Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the minister was there and she helped to set up the social union a little further back than that, in 1999. It is now 2002 and the government is still not acting on dispute settlement mechanisms with the provinces.

The deal has to be made in 90 days. They have a gun to their heads and the provinces say they are going to go it alone. If that happens, the federal funding for health will be in ruins. Why has it come to this?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me inform the hon. member that in fact federal and provincial officials have been working on the development of a dispute avoidance and resolution mechanism for some months now.

The Prime Minister recently wrote to Premier Klein of Alberta asking that his Minister of Health work with her provincial counterparts to reach an agreement in relation to a dispute avoidance and resolution mechanism. I will take up the Prime Minister's advice. I hope my provincial counterparts will do that and therefore be able to resolve this matter in the very near future.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

YOUNG OFFENDERS

Mr. Michel Bellehumeur (Berthier—Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in connection with young offenders, the new Minister of Justice suggested that he would give thought to ways in which Quebec's approach could be respected.

Are we to understand from the minister's rapid about-face on the subject of young offenders that, when one becomes a minister in Ottawa, one quickly leaves behind the consensus of Quebec for the Canadian way?

Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, there has been no about-face. I myself have had an opportunity previously to examine all the legislation. What we are talking about here is what is in the best interest of young people caught up in the system.

One of the primary objectives of Bill C-7 is the rehabilitation of young people. I think that this is a laudable objective. What is true for all the other provinces is also true for the province of Quebec, because what we want above all is to protect society by rehabilitating young people.

In this sense, I think that Quebec—

• (1435)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Berthier—Montcalm.

Mr. Michel Bellehumeur (Berthier—Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we know that amendments were made to the young offenders bill to respect the specific needs of young aboriginals, and we are in agreement with those amendments.

However, we would have liked to see Quebec's distinct character respected as well in the treatment of young offenders.

Why is Quebec being denied similar treatment?

Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in recent months and years, the members opposite have tried to promote a number of myths about Bill C-7.

What I would like to point out is that Quebec does not have an intrinsically distinct character. What I mean is that now, through Bill C-7, we are going to place greater emphasis on non-judicial approaches to improving the rehabilitation of young offenders.

In this sense, I find Bill C-7 laudable, particularly since I think that many reports on the system that was introduced in Quebec have been critical of that system. In my view, with Bill C-7, we could improve the rehabilitation of young offenders.

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[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Rob Anders (Calgary West, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the stories of 30 year old rusted out helicopters and borrowed batteries have now been eclipsed. Our troops are being sent to the Afghanistan desert in the middle of winter equipped with forest green camouflage. The government sold the uniforms only a few months before September 11. Our troops are risking their lives

overseas and the government cannot even put the proper clothes on their backs.

Does the minister stand behind his decision to sell their uniforms?

Hon. Art Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian forces command officers, including all of the officers and the men and women of the PPCLI are quite happy with the uniform they have. They feel that the uniform is going to do the kind of job they need to do.

There is no question of government policy. There is no question of funding. They get the uniforms they need to do the job. They have the uniforms they need to do the job.

Mr. Rob Anders (Calgary West, Canadian Alliance): Further shame, Mr. Speaker. The Liberal member for Oakville has said that she has had enough with this war because she is not seeing any payoff. I want the member to apologize to the Canadians who lost family in the World Trade Center attack. I want her to apologize to our troops who are risking their lives in Afghanistan.

How can the minister explain this hypocrisy and the slap in the face to our troops?

Hon. Art Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as well as his apology to Nelson Mandela, of course.

Aside from that, our troops are playing a very significant role. We are the fourth largest national contributor to the campaign against terrorism. They are doing a terrific job with all of their equipment and all of their clothing helping them to do that.

* * *

[Translation]

COMMON CURRENCY

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the latest new lows to which the Canadian dollar has sunk have renewed debate on adopting a common currency in the Americas, something the Bloc Québécois has been proposing for several years now.

Quite recently, the president of Bombardier, Laurent Beaudoin, and Paul Tellier, of CN, added their voices to the call for a debate on the idea.

Will the Minister of Finance recognize the importance of beginning a serious debate in Canada on the future of a common currency in the Americas?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can certainly provide the Bloc Québécois' finance critic with my opinion.

If we had been using the American dollar during the Asian crisis in 1997, we would have ended up in a recession in Canada, rather than having gotten through it unscathed. That is because there are fundamental differences between our two economies. Therefore, adopting the American dollar could never be justified.

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we have to look at what might happen in the future. The economic integration of the three Americas is coming and monetary integration is coming with it.

Oral Questions

So, could the minister not at the very least agree to a substantive debate, and to the idea of setting up an American monetary institute, whose primary objective would be to pave the way and set the stage for the inescapable monetary integration of the Americas?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is nothing preventing a debate. However, it seems as though the member opposite is recommending Argentina's monetary policy. That does not seem to me to be the route to follow.

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[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Brian Pallister (Portage—Lisgar, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the brand new Minister of Foreign Affairs unfortunately chose to use his first interview to suggest that the people of the United States are not, in his estimation, sufficiently tolerant people. That kind of rhetoric attempts to define Canada in terms of what it is not rather than what it is. That kind of rhetoric weakens rather than strengthens Canada's sense of national identity.

I want to give the minister the opportunity to rise in his place and apologize for his unfair comments to the American friends we have.

• (1440)

Mr. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am always happy to apologize in the House. Perhaps if the hon. member would apologize for reading the press selectively and not reading everything I said, I might be willing to have a discussion with him. The fact of the matter is I did say that Canada is a different country from the United States.

There are some in the House and some in this country who believe that we should do everything the United States wants us to do. We on this side of the House do not believe that. We strongly believe that we live in an independent country where, as the Prime Minister has said, our laws are made here by our standards and our values. When I had that interview—

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Portage—Lisgar.

Mr. Brian Pallister (Portage—Lisgar, Canadian Alliance): It is a missed opportunity, Mr. Speaker. Members are applauding nothing but empty rhetoric yet again.

The Liberal government recently censured Israel for its violence against Palestinians. This month the Palestinian Authority was directly implicated in the attempted shipment of 50 tonnes of weapons and explosives to terrorists.

Given the Palestinian Authority's direct involvement in terrorism, the government's one-sided approach undermines the balanced role that Canada can and should play in resolving the conflict. Will the government immediately rethink our aid and diplomatic relationship with the Palestinian Authority and Yasser Arafat?

Mr. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, the premise of the member's question is leaving half out. The government has clearly condemned any implication of the Palestinian Authority in that shipment. It is not constructive toward the peace process.

Where this government has always kept the same standard, whether dealing with Palestine, the Palestinian Authority or Israel, it has always been what is constructive to the peace process. We have completely condemned that shipment, just as we have been condemning the terrible acts of terror which have caused such harm to the people of Israel for whom we have great condolence and great sympathy. We now see peace slipping away because of these acts. We condemn all acts of terror. We condemn any acts which do not lead to peace in the Middle East.

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AIRLINE SAFETY

Mr. Stan Keyes (Hamilton West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport. In his recent acclaimed budget the hon. Minister of Finance announced that the program of armed police on Canadian aircraft would be expanded beyond those flights flying to Washington.

Could the Minister of Transport tell us are there or are there not armed police flying on passenger aircraft in the country?

Hon. David Collette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): The short answer, Mr. Speaker, in contrast to what has been portrayed to the media, is yes. This program is now in effect and no airline in Canada is excluded from that program.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Svend Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who I congratulate on his well deserved appointment. My question concerns Canada's role in Afghanistan, and respect for Canadian law and Canadian values as well as international law.

Under regulation 12, pursuant to the Geneva Conventions Act, which is a Canadian statute, a detainee whose entitlement to prisoner of war status is in doubt shall be treated as a prisoner of war until a tribunal determines that the detainee is not entitled to that status.

Is the minister prepared to assure the House that that law will be respected and that there will be no detainees turned over until that determination has been made?

Mr. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I very much thank the hon. member for the first premise in his question.

As for the second, the government has made it very clear that all detainees will be treated, when held by Canadian forces, in accordance with international law and particularly in accordance with the Geneva convention. We are studying exactly how this will be applied in the circumstances. The Prime Minister made it clear this morning that the government will be following very clearly how this evolves.

Oral Questions

●(1445)

SHIPBUILDING

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for many years now Canadians have been asking the government for leadership to develop a shipbuilding industry that will in turn incorporate the jobs that are so desperately needed in the country. In turn what they are getting is the government is negotiating a trade deal with Norway that in effect will kill any hopes or aspirations of the shipbuilding industry.

My question is for the external affairs minister. Why is the government negotiating a deal with Norway that would destroy the hopes of the shipbuilding industry, its workers and families and its communities?

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues from the Atlantic caucus who have been working very closely with me on this issue.

The Government of Canada has been considering a free trade agreement with EFTA countries for three years. As we know, trade is the lifeblood of the Canadian economy. We export 45% of our GDP, and it remains very important.

What I am saying is we are concerned about the issues that the member has raised. We will look into it very carefully. We are preoccupied with the future of our shipbuilding and marine industries, and will certainly continue to work with everyone on this issue.

* * *

CROWN CORPORATIONS

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, PC/DR): Mr. Speaker, in 1999 Alfonso Gagliano, appointed by the Prime Minister as the minister in charge of Liberal fortunes in Quebec, apparently arranged to sell a valuable piece of Montreal property to long time Liberal supporter René Lépine. Incredibly, the selling price of this property was less than half the market value, and now experts say that Lépine stands to make \$16 million on the deal.

Why did the Liberals force the Canada Lands Company to sell a property to a Liberal at fire sale prices when it was one of the hottest properties in Montreal?

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Infrastructure and Crown Corporations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has made a number of allegations that I do not think he has the facts to justify. In fact, he will know that Canada Lands Company and other corporations dealing with crown assets do so in accordance with rules which govern their disposition. He has offered no evidence that these rules were not followed in the case which is before us.

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, PC/DR): The rules, Mr. Speaker, are apparently called the Gagliano rules. Do you want to know how bad it is? As an example, all crown corporations that reported to Mr. Gagliano were told to put a Liberal campaign worker, Michèle Tremblay, on their payroll for speech writing and providing access to the minister. The last time a Liberal campaign worker was tasked with providing access to the minister, Mr. Pierre Corbeil, was convicted of influence peddling. The company does not seem to learn.

When will the Deputy Prime Minister appoint an independent ethics counsellor to investigate the activities of Mr. Gagliano and report back, not to the cabinet or to the Prime Minister but to parliament?

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Infrastructure and Crown Corporations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us bear in mind that the relationship between a minister who essentially is the shareholder of a crown corporation and the corporation will always be a complex one. That is why so many members of the opposition are writing to ministers who are responsible for crown corporations asking them to intervene in all sorts of ways.

The point is that we need to look at the rules governing the relationship between crown corporations and their ministers. The ethics counsellor has proposed some revised rules. We are considering them, and we will deal with them in due course.

* * *

[Translation]

**PUBLIC WORKS AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES
CANADA**

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, Alfonso Gagliano was dismissed from his position as the head of the “department to the cronies of the Liberals”, where patronage and perks abounded.

According to the new Minister of Public Works, Mr. Gagliano has done a good job and he wishes to continue to administer the department in the Gagliano tradition.

If Mr. Gagliano was the good administrator the minister claims him to be, why then was he dismissed?

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all I must take this opportunity to thank the Right Hon. Prime Minister for entrusting me with the mandate of Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada.

I would also like to point out to the hon. member across the way that we are all here to do the best possible job for all Canadians.

I believe my predecessor has done a good job. I intend to do a good job and to be answerable to Canadians and to this House. That is my commitment.

[English]

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I wish the government would practise what it preaches. It gets better than this. A few days after praising the minister for a fine job, the new public works minister declared that a priority would be to clean up the department, making sure taxpayer money was properly administered. Clearly, the minister was confirming that taxpayer money was mismanaged under Mr. Gagliano.

Oral Questions

I ask the Deputy Prime Minister this. If Mr. Gagliano did such a fine job, why does the department need an overhaul from the government's new minister of everything?

• (1450)

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the accusation that the member has just made is factually incorrect. If he believes that he has such a quotation on my part, I invite him to table it in the House or, even better, to say it out there.

* * *

[Translation]

DEVELOPMENT FUND FOR THE AMERICAS

Mr. Yves Rocheleau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, two major events will take place this week. New York will welcome the participants at the Davos economic forum, while Pôrto Alegre, in Brazil, will host the world social forum. These two forums will, each in its own way, deal with the issue of globalization.

The Bloc Québécois proposed the creation of a development fund for the Americas, under the FTAA and NAFTA. A copy of that proposal was given to the Minister for International Trade.

Does the Minister for International Trade support the principle of establishing a development fund for the Americas?

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is very involved in the negotiations on a free trade area of the Americas.

We believe of course that our agenda across the hemisphere since the Quebec City summit includes social, democratic and, of course, trade components that are at the core of our initiatives.

Our government is also ensuring that social progress is achieved through existing tools. For example, we want to make sure that the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank fulfill their roles.

I salute the major commitment made last week by the Inter-American Development Bank to support Mexico. We want—and I know that Bloc Québécois members will appreciate this very much—to avoid useless duplication.

Mr. Yves Rocheleau (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, does the minister agree that the fund created by Europe to facilitate the participation of countries such as Ireland, Spain, Portugal and Greece in the common market could serve as a model under the FTAA, and does he also support the creation of such a fund?

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am aware of the great interest shown by our BQ and PQ friends for the European model. However, that model involves a much deeper integration than what we want to do in the Americas. The economic integration that we want to achieve in the Americas is a free trade agreement. A free trade agreement and a common market are two different things. A European union involves an even more in-depth process.

We respect the European model, because it is appropriate for Europeans, but let us have the imagination and the creativity to build institutions that specifically address our needs in the Americas.

[English]

CANADA LANDS COMPANY

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton Centre-East, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the minister of public works on his appointment.

The same government responsible for Canada's deplorably discounted loonie seemingly now is proud of Canada's 66% discounted great land giveaway in Quebec. Canada Lands Company sold a \$12 million property in Montreal for \$4 million, one-third of the market value in Canadian dollars. Something is rotten in the state of Canada.

Will the minister investigate this fire sale sellout of the assets of the Canadian taxpayers?

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Infrastructure and Crown Corporations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member is referring to the disposition of a property which I am advised occurred under the rules of the Canada lands corporation, an open bid where there were multiple assessments by independent agents. If he has other facts, I can only tell him the facts that I have seen in the file.

The point he makes is one that should be what are the rules and have they been followed. Apparently the rules are adequate and they have been followed.

• (1455)

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton Centre-East, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, \$4 million for a \$23 million piece of property: some rules.

The Canada Lands Company shortchanged the Canadian taxpayer \$8 million when it fire sold Montreal real estate for only one-third of its \$12 million value. In Edmonton the Canada Lands Company is negotiating the sale disposal of Griesbach federal defence land.

Could the minister advise if this land too is to be fire sale priced? Will the taxpayer receive a badly discounted market value on this property too? How low will this price go?

Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Infrastructure and Crown Corporations, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can only assume that the hon. member is a certified appraiser because he seems to know a lot about the value of properties.

What can one do except rely upon appraisals and rely upon the authenticity of bids that are made? He seems to suggest that somehow this corporation ought to be able to sell property for more than the highest bid.

* * *

TRADE

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Bras d'Or—Cape Breton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the offshore supply and marine fabrication industry is starting to boom in Atlantic Canada. This is an industry that provides great promise, but a trade deal with the EFTA potentially could harm this emerging sector.

Oral Questions

Will the Minister for International Trade ensure that in any trade talks the benefits of this offshore sector will be preserved so that we can realize its maximum impact for all Canadians?

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said a little earlier, I am very grateful to my caucus colleagues from Atlantic Canada with whom I have spent hours discussing this very issue during our caucus meetings of the last few days.

I want to tell the House that we will use due diligence. We have been considering the EFTA trade agreement for three years now. Trade is the lifeblood of Canada, but we are preoccupied with what the member has been bringing to our attention. We are continuing to consult with the shipbuilding industry and we will continue those consultations to make sure that any agreement reflects the interests of all Canadians.

* * *

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, as chair of the public accounts committee, I am appalled when I see accountability being trashed. Now what do I see? The President of the Treasury Board has shut down access to information when it comes to releasing expense accounts and travel costs for ministers and their staffs. Clearly they do not want any embarrassment such as fur coats being paid for by the taxpayer and being made public.

My question for the President of the Treasury Board is this. Why is she telling ministers that they now have the authority to hide their waste mismanagement and perhaps even illegal spending behind a veil of secrecy?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all ministers must respect the Access to Information Act and the Privacy Act, that is, both acts at once.

With matters relating to the expenses of ministers and their staff, both acts need to be considered. What the Treasury Board Secretariat did was to make a clarification following a supreme court decision which gave a very broad definition of what personal information was. Therefore, currently, it is still available, but with the consent of the person concerned.

[*English*]

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Canadian Alliance): As I said, they hide behind a veil, Mr. Speaker. Let me quote the minister of public works, and this is an actual quote, when he was in opposition. He said "Since when is potential embarrassment a criterion for screening information under the Access to Information Act?"

Clearly Liberal government members have no shame when it comes to hiding embarrassing information. They cry crocodile tears when in opposition and when they get to government they sanctimoniously ignore their own words.

Will the President of the Treasury Board act today to reverse their decision on access to information, or will she continue to shield people such as Alfonso who thought that a cabinet post was a licence to make real money?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, allow me to ignore the allegations of the hon. member for St. Albert and address Canadians.

It is very clear that ministers must respect both pieces of legislation. The Access to Information Act is a very important piece of legislation for Canadians, but the Privacy Act is equally so. When the supreme court issues a ruling, we must also respect its directions, and that is what we did in this case.

* * *

**PUBLIC WORKS AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES
CANADA**

Mr. Ghislain Lebel (Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, while the Prime Minister is stating that the former Minister of Public Works and Government Services, his friend, Mr. Gagliano, did nothing wrong, the new minister claims that he has the necessary staff to fulfill his obligations without relying on outside firms, in particular in the field of communications, and that he intends to clean up the department.

Earlier, the minister avoided the question. We want an answer. Why do a clean up if, as the Prime Minister says, everything is squeaky clean?

• (1500)

Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not know where the hon. member got his quote. It is probably where he got the other one. Neither one of these quotes exists.

If the hon. member wants to know which approach I intend to use in the field of communications, there is no doubt that I want to rely on the very competent public servants who are there. Also, crown corporations generated a lot of work, since there were several of them. They are not under my authority. Therefore, I believe that, generally speaking, I have the necessary resources within the department.

Of course, it is sometimes necessary to get expertise from elsewhere. However, my general approach will be the one that I mentioned, and I thank the hon. member for his question.

* * *

[*English*]

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Charles Hubbard (Miramichi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food, the standing committee of the House and the Prime Minister's task force on agriculture have all been working to improve the vision and policies of agriculture for the country.

Recently our minister met with his provincial and territorial counterparts to discuss the vision and future of agriculture. Would he please report to the House the outcome of that meeting of last month?

Privilege

Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at the meeting last week with my provincial and territorial counterpart ministers we made considerable progress toward developing a new agricultural policy framework.

We mapped out the goals and next steps to ensure that the policy is in the situation where we can have an umbrella agreement at the June federal-provincial ministers meeting.

We will now expand and continue the consultation and discussion with all partners in the industry to strengthen the agriculture and agri-food industry and the Canadian economy.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, PC/DR): Mr. Speaker, every time the dollar drops Canadians take a pay cut. The Prime Minister has said the Canadian dollar would strengthen as Canada moves from the current recession into a more prosperous economic period.

Why should Canadians believe the Prime Minister's Liberal loonie logic when under his watch during a period of unprecedented global economic growth the Canadian dollar dropped faster than Brian Tobin's leadership prospects?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us just take a look at the record under the Prime Minister: a current account surplus record, an exports record. Economic growth is one of the strongest of the G-7. Inflation is low and there is economic growth, coming through the recovery.

When the hon. member's party was last in power the country went through the deepest and longest recession of the last 20 years. Under this government Canada is coming through it better than any other G-7 country. That is what is happening.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

CROWN CORPORATIONS

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton Centre-East, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege to charge that I have been deliberately misled on three occasions in the House by the former member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel when he was minister of public works and government services with respect to his involvement with crown corporations. Historically the fact that the member no longer sits in the House does not negate the act nor the possible censor. On page 111 of the 22nd edition of *Erskine May* it states:

The Commons may treat the making of a deliberately misleading statement as a contempt.

On page 141 of the 19th edition of *Erskine May* it states:

Conspiracy to deceive either House or any committees of either House will also be treated as a breach of privilege.

The second edition of Joseph Maingot's *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada* at page 234 explains that in order for the Speaker to find a prima facie case in a matter involving a deliberate misleading statement, there must be an admission by someone in authority such as a minister of the crown or an officer of a department.

I present an admission from Mr. Jon Grant, former chairman of Canada Lands, that certain statements made in the House by the former minister of public works were false and that the member was aware of the dishonesty of those statements.

In the November 5, 2001 *Hansard* the former member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel is recorded as saying in response to my question in the House:

—let me make it very clear that crown corporations manage their own affairs and ministers do not get involved in giving contracts.

On November 7, 2001, in response to another question, the former member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel said:

I said from the beginning that I do not get involved directly with crown corporation operations.

On November 8, 2001, responding again to a question, the former minister said:

—I do not intervene in current operations of crown corporations. There is a board of directors and there is a management board.

Mr. Grant told the *Globe and Mail* that he was asked directly by the former minister of public works to hire one of his friends and organizers, Tony Mignacca.

He was told by the former minister's chief of staff that the minister's office wanted to be directly involved in the company's Quebec files.

He reports that he had to fight off numerous attempts by the minister's office to improperly influence business deals overseen by Canada Lands.

Canada Lands was asked by the former minister's office to hire Michele Tremblay, another friend of the minister, for \$5,000 per month.

Mr. Grant's allegations drew support from a board member, Mr. Basque, who told the *Globe and Mail* that working at Canada Lands had been rewarding despite the difficulties posed by working with the current staff in the minister's office. He said:

Unfortunately, in some circumstances, there may be some influences that try to make themselves felt.

The *Toronto Star* reported Mr. Basque as saying that he was well aware of the problems of high level political meddling at the federal agency caused by the former minister of public works and his staff in recent years. When he was asked about complaints voiced by Mr. Grant, Mr. Basque said they were bang on.

There has been credible testimony to support the character and opinions of Mr. Grant. For example, the president of the Peterborough Chamber of Commerce said:

Jon Grant is one of the most respected people in his community. You will not find someone who has a bad word to say about him, so these charges are pretty serious... Jon is a man of tremendous integrity and honesty. If he says there is a problem, then people around here will just take it as gospel.

The former member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel deliberately misled me and the House. I ask that this be a prima facie question of privilege and I am prepared to move the appropriate motion.

*Routine Proceedings***ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

•(1505)

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman has proposed a question of privilege to the House. He has laid out in the material to which he has made reference a number of assertions and allegations. Those assertions and allegations may well represent a difference of opinion or a different interpretation of facts on the part of certain individuals.

I would suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that the assertions in themselves do not disclose a question of privilege. The allegations have been made. They have been reported upon. They have been repeated here again today, but simply the making of the allegation does not in and of itself constitute a question of privilege.

I would respectfully submit that a basis for a question of privilege has not been put before you and therefore the hon. member's recommendation on how to deal with this matter should not be accepted.

The Speaker: The Chair has heard the comments from the hon. member for Edmonton Centre East and the government House leader and thanks both hon. members for their submissions.

I will review the matter with some care and get back to the House in due course with a decision in respect of this question of privilege.

* * *

•(1510)

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC/DR): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order arising from question period and a response from the Deputy Prime Minister to the member for Edmonton Centre East with respect to the same issue.

In his response to the member the Deputy Prime Minister and second in command gave a response in which he referred very specifically to a file. Yet that was a very oblique reference. There was no context to the file. He appeared to be drawing some mysterious information from that file. I am wondering if the Deputy Prime Minister would be willing to table that.

Of course the Deputy Prime Minister is very quick to be precise in his answers, but when he referred to this file there was no context and no reference. Perhaps he would be willing to table that for the House.

The Speaker: The hon. member's point of order will be noted and at an appropriate time I am sure he will have a response from the hon. Deputy Prime Minister.

*[English]***GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS**

Mr. Geoff Regan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 10 petitions.

* * *

ALTERNATE DISPUTE RESOLUTION ACT

Mr. Mac Harb (Ottawa Centre, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-422, an act to provide for alternate dispute resolution.

He said: Mr. Speaker, the purpose of this enactment is to require the Government of Canada and any agency or corporation of the government to use alternate dispute resolution as the first method of attempting to resolve any legal dispute arising out of the application or administration of an act of parliament or any regulations made under it before proceeding to a court of law to seek resolution of the dispute.

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

* * *

PETITIONS

ANIMAL CRUELTY

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise again to present a petition from a large number of citizens of the Peterborough area who support Bill C-15B, the animal cruelty legislation.

These people point to several highly publicized examples of animal abuse and neglect. Sadly some of those are in our own region. They point out that frontline workers such as veterinarians, humane societies and others are becoming more frustrated in their daily work.

They know the legislation has been before the House for a long time. They call upon the Parliament of Canada to expedite Bill C-15B to enact it into law as soon as possible. They ask all members of the House to exercise good conscience when they are doing that.

WORKERS COMPENSATION

Mr. Dick Proctor (Palliser, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I draw the attention of the House to a petition signed by a number of folks in Saskatchewan who are concerned about the fate of 300 Saskatchewan women whose husbands were killed on the job prior to 1985. They were denied WC benefits for 14 years due to a change in their marital status.

In 1999 these widows each received a one time tax free compensation payment of \$80,000 from the Saskatchewan Workers Compensation Board. However, because that pushed many of them over the threshold, Canada Customs and Revenue clawed back federally income tested programs including old age security from many of these women.

Routine Proceedings

Therefore the petitioners are calling upon parliament to request the federal government to take appropriate measures to ensure that Canada Customs and Revenue does not consider this one time payment as income for the 1999 tax year.

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Mr. Norman Doyle (St. John's East, PC/DR): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition signed by about 500 people from St. John's and area. The petition makes reference to the fact that Canadians are horrified by pornography which depicts children and astounded by legal determinations that possession of such pornography is not criminal.

The petitioners feel it is the duty of parliament through the enactment and enforcement of the criminal code to protect the most vulnerable members of society from sexual abuse. They are asking parliament to take the measures necessary to ensure that possession of child pornography remains a serious criminal offence and that federal police forces be directed to give priority to enforcing the law for the protection of children.

* * *

• (1515)

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Geoff Regan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 87, 88 and 95.

[Text]

Question No. 87—**Mr. Jim Abbott:**

With respect to the Copyright Act: (a) do sections 30.8(8) and 30.9(6) allow for royalties to be collected upon transfer of medium; and (b) if not, why not?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Sections 30.8(8) and 30.9(6) provide that where a collective society can issue a licence to broadcasters for the purpose of reproductions of sound recordings, such as transfer of media, royalties are paid pursuant to the licence.

Question No. 88—**Mr. Ted White:**

How many audits of individual taxpayers, and how many audits of individual corporations, listed by province, were completed by Revenue Canada/Canada Customs and Revenue Agency in the years 1998, 1999, 2000, and 2001?

Hon. Elinor Caplan (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): On November 1, 1999, the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency, CCRA, came into being. For the fiscal year 1999-2000, the CCRA issued its first annual report to the provinces. These reports further enhance our accountability to the provinces. It forms the basis of an accountability regime, now in development, which future editions of this report will reflect.

It is important to note that the numbers for the 1999-2000 figures include the case count for tax and GST/HST. For the 2000-01 draft report, the numbers include the file count for tax and GST/HST. The difference between case and file count is explained in the tables below. For the fiscal years prior to 1999-2000, audits were captured and reported on a national basis.

For reporting purposes, it should also be noted that the CCRA does not segregate the data on audits by individual and corporation as an audit may include both.

Consequently, the numbers presented may not be used for comparative purposes as the statistics for the years 1999-2000 and 2000-2001 were recorded differently. The numbers for the years 1997-1998 and 1998-1999 are aggregate numbers, which include statistics not captured for reporting purposes for subsequent years.

1997-98 and 1998-99: The numbers for the fiscal years 1997-98 and 1998-99 were reported on a national basis and were not segregated by province. The following numbers were as reported in the departmental performance report for those years:

	1997-98	1998-99
Total file count	983,151	1,034,448

A compliance action is considered complete and reported for production purposes when the audit work has been finished on all files in the compliance action and the audit manager has reviewed them. Re-assessments arising from the audit may not be processed until some time after the completion of the compliance action. For compliance actions completed near the end of the fiscal year, this may result in reporting the results into the following fiscal year.

Results shown relate to audit activities carried out in the respective tax services offices, TSO, located within that province. The results of an audit conducted by a TSO may not exclusively affect taxpayers in that particular province, i.e., an audit conducted in a TSO may include taxpayers, individuals and corporations, located in another province. For reporting purposes, the audit is reported by the TSO where the audit originated.

Activities carried out in the tax centers have been excluded as they are responsible for processing workloads for all Canada irrespective of the province where they are located.

1999-2000 and 2000-01: The 1999-2000 data are taken from the published information to the provinces. The numbers for the 2000-01 are those that have been included in the draft reports prepared for the provinces.

Routine Proceedings

Province	1999-2000 Compliance Actions	New Brunswick	10,406
		Quebec	90,590
		Ontario	254,486
Newfoundland	3,952	Manitoba	13,406
Nova Scotia	8,998	Saskatchewan	10,850
Prince Edward Island	1,209	Alberta	64,356
New Brunswick	6,483	British Columbia	91,662
Quebec	Unavailable	Nunavut	54
Ontario	131,923	Northwest Territories	41
Manitoba	10,333	Yukon	89
Saskatchewan	10,156	Totals	560,916
Alberta	42,972		File count * *
British Columbia	52,179		
Nunavut	Unavailable		
Northwest Territories	Unavailable		
Yukon	Unavailable		
Totals	268,205		

* * A file count includes all entities touched by an audit, individuals and corporations.

Question No. 95—Mr. Peter MacKay:

How many students have been admitted to Canada since 1993 from Iraq, Iran, Sudan, Libya and Syria?

* A case count normally includes more than one taxpayer, individuals and corporations.

Province	2000-2001 Compliance Actions
Newfoundland	7,380
Nova Scotia	15,636
Prince Edward Island	1,960

Hon. Denis Coderre (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): From 1993 to the end of August 2001, the number of nationals from Iraq, Iran, Sudan, Libya and Syria whose primary purpose for being in Canada as a student is as follows: All applicants for student authorizations who are from these countries undergo background checks to ensure that they are not inadmissible to Canada under the security sections of the Immigration Act. They are shown here by year of entry, which may predate their first student authorization:

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	Total
Students										
Libya	236	110	228	325	165	205	204	286	133	1,893
Sudan	5	5	7	6	4	2	5	4	0	38
Syria	8	9	5	14	8	19	23	35	41	162
Iran	421	226	124	154	152	164	204	232	204	1,881
Iraq	5	4	2	5	3	0	2	2	2	25
Total	675	354	366	504	333	390	438	559	380	3,999

[Translation]

Mr. Guy St-Julien (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The time limit for obtaining a response to Questions Nos. 81 and 82 concerning the Department of Natural Resources in the main estimates and the supplementary estimates with regard to the mining sector, both standing in my name, has expired.

Considering the new procedure for written questions, will I get an answer today and, if not, will these questions be referred to the House or to the standing committee?

[English]

Mr. Geoff Regan: Mr. Speaker, as you will know and as the hon. member will know, there was a cabinet shuffle recently. A number of questions were ready to be returned to the House with answers. The

shuffle has delayed that. New ministers must have a chance to review the questions and approve them. I expect we will have them in the House shortly, including those of the hon. member.

I ask that all remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Before I deal with the hon. member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough perhaps he will want to hear what the Chair has to say because there is a new standing order in effect in relation to these matters. Perhaps after hearing it I will have disposed of the point of order of the hon. member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik as well as what I anticipate is one from the hon. member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough.

Speaker's Ruling

[Translation]

Pursuant to Standing Order 39(5), it is my duty to inform the House that the failure of the government to respond to the following questions on the order paper is deemed referred to the various standing committees of the House as follows: Questions Nos. 81 and 82, standing in the name of the hon. member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik, are referred to the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, Northern Development and Natural Resources.

[English]

Question No. 85, standing in the name of the hon. member for North Vancouver, will be referred to the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology; Question No. 86, standing in the name of the hon. member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade; Questions Nos. 90, 91, 92 and 93, standing in the name of the hon. member for Vancouver East, to the Standing Committee on Transport and Government Operations; Question No. 94, standing in the name of the hon. member for Edmonton Centre-East, to the Standing Committee on Transport and Government Operations; Question No. 96, standing in the name of the hon. member for South Shore, to the Standing Committee on Finance; Question No. 97, standing in the name of the hon. member for Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore, to the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development; and Question No. 98, standing in the name of the hon. member for Yorkton—Melville, to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

[Translation]

Finally, Question No. 99, standing in the name of the hon. member for Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, is referred to the Standing Committee on Transport and Government Operations.

[English]

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC/DR): Mr. Speaker, it is only to inquire as to whether Question No. 95 was included in the list. I believe you will find the 45 day period has also expired with reference to a question from myself.

The Speaker: It was not in the list but it was just answered I believe by the hon. parliamentary secretary if I am not mistaken. If that is the case, and I am quite sure it was on the list that was read out, the hon. member will find the answer printed in tomorrow's *Hansard* to his great relief.

• (1520)

[Translation]

The hon. member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik.

Mr. Guy St-Julien: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Since my questions will be referred to the committee, will I be informed as to when the committee will meet so I can be present to ask these two questions?

The Speaker: I am sure the clerk of the committee will inform the member as to when the questions will be tabled before the committee. This is a matter for the committee and I suggest that the member make his request to the clerk or to the chair of the committee.

[English]

Is it agreed that the remaining questions stand?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

THE DOLLAR

The Speaker: The Chair has two applications for emergency debate. We will deal first with the hon. member for Calgary Southeast.

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I rise, pursuant to Standing Order 52, to seek leave to move:

That this House do now adjourn for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter requiring urgent consideration.

Mr. Speaker, I provided you with written notice of my intent to raise the matter in a letter dated January 22 in which I sought leave to move adjournment:

—for the purpose of discussing the issue of the low value of the Canadian dollar that yesterday hit a record low, and to examine its impact on the finances of Canadians and the Canadian economy.

Since the time I wrote the letter, the dollar has hit even further record lows. In the past two months it has lost nearly 10% of its nominal value as measured against the U.S. currency.

I understand it would not be appropriate for the House to debate temporary fluctuations in currency as they occur from time to time. However we have seen a precipitous and steep decline in the value of our currency which has seized the nation as a matter of great urgency.

This is not something we have sought to bring before the House before. Nor would we do so lightly in the future. Rather, this is the only opportunity for the House to discuss this urgent matter. It is not something which could be brought before us in the form of normal legislation. It is a matter which falls within the appropriate administrative purview of the government in terms of its oversight of monetary policy and its execution of fiscal policy.

For those reasons I see leave to make the motion.

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: The hon. member for Calgary Southeast picked a bad day on which to propose the motion. We are debating the budget after all today.

Hon. Ralph Goodale: And tomorrow.

The Speaker: The government House leader advises the chair very helpfully that it will be debated tomorrow too, but I think any sense of urgency on this issue could therefore be disposed of by having speeches during the budget debate that dealt with the issue because it does seem to legitimately concern the financial affairs of the country, as pointed out very ably by the hon. member for Calgary Southeast.

Accordingly, in my view the motion at this time fails to meet the exigencies of the standing order.

HEALTH CARE

The Speaker: The second application for an emergency debate is from the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my colleagues in the federal NDP caucus I respectfully put to you our case for an emergency debate on the state of health care and the future of medicare in Canada.

This is a matter of urgent and pressing consideration that goes to the very heart of what the nation is all about. It speaks to the gravest of concerns among Canadians and begs for action, consideration and deliberation by the House of Commons.

Given recent developments and the significant events that have occurred in the days preceding the opening of the House, the Chamber ought to consider health care a priority issue and spend time on an emergency basis discussing the events that have unfolded and the solutions that are necessary.

Mr. Speaker, I come to you at the first opportunity to make the case given these events. Most notably, I reference for you the recent meeting of provincial and territorial first ministers who came together to discuss national health care issues and made recommendations pertaining to the work of this place and the government. They pointed very clearly to the abdication of federal leadership on a serious national public policy matter.

It is not good enough for the government to suggest we wait until the Romanow commission has reported. It is not good enough for Canadians to be expected to wait until November 2002 on such a critical issue. It is not good enough for the Prime Minister to say he has joined the hallelujah chorus. It is not good enough for the new Minister of Health to speculate out loud about the possibility of opening up the Canada Health Act and to cite the benefits of private health care delivery.

Much has happened in the last few days and weeks that begs our attention. They are worrisome developments. I refer to the fact that Albertans are faced with a real possibility of necessary treatment being delisted and medical savings accounts being implemented. I refer to the massive layoffs of health care workers in British Columbia. I refer to advancements made with respect to privatization in health care delivery and specifically private hospitals. I refer to the fact that debate is happening all around us but not in this place where Canadians have vested their confidence to ensure the preservation of a national health care system and where we have responsibility.

I urge for an emergency debate to give direction to the new Minister of Health and develop solutions for this critical juncture in the history of health care in Canada.

● (1525)

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: The Chair has listened attentively to the representations the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre very capably put forward on this point, as is the case with the hon. member for Calgary Southeast. She does not face quite the same difficulties he does.

In this case, though I think the hon. member knows the Chair is fairly lenient in granting these debates and certainly would find a

The Budget

debate on health care fascinating, I think the hon. member perhaps is premature in bringing her application to the House because she has failed to satisfy the Chair on the question of urgency.

The debate does have to be on a matter of urgent public importance, and while the hon. member has raised certain issues I do not feel that the Chair is satisfied at this time that the sense of urgency in this debate has been met. Accordingly, I am not prepared to grant the debate at this time.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed consideration of the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, and of the amendment.

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, before oral question period, I spoke about a concern that is dear to my heart, namely shipbuilding and the lack of additional measures relating to it in the Minister of Finance's budget of December 10.

I addressed this subject in response to a speech by a Conservative member, but I had something else prepared and I would like to share it with you.

In the budget brought down by the Minister of Finance last December 10, there are three qualities or three shortcomings, in short three elements, in my opinion. First, there is redundancy, but I will come back to that later. There is also evidence of indifference, of the Minister of Finance's indifference to certain problems, particularly those of the unemployed. Finally, there is evidence of greater interference in provincial affairs.

Why, first, is it redundant? Because the Minister of Finance again mentioned his so-called tax cuts. Here in Ottawa, referring to billions of dollars may seem like a lot. It is a big number, but when spread over several years, and analysed on an annual basis, \$100 billion over five years is far less impressive.

When I speak of redundancy, the minister has practically repeated everything he has already said about his so-called tax cuts from his last budget, or the ones before that.

There is often confusion when reference is made to tax cuts; what should be said is a reduction in taxation rates, which is not the same thing.

I have checked the Statistics Canada figures. From 1960 to 2000, there is a 40 to 1 ratio. Taxes have increased, but with inflation at certain periods of economic growth, individuals and businesses have been paying more taxes, without the government or governments deciding to raise the rate.

The Budget

What the Minister of Finance has done is to bring in indexation plus a drop in taxation rates to 16%, 24% and 26%. This we find insufficient. What we find reprehensible is such things as his claim that he has supposedly given 610,000 taxpayers with incomes of between \$25,000 and \$50,000 a tax cut of \$92 million. He has given \$115 million over five years to 362,000 taxpayers with incomes of between \$50,000 and \$80,000. But where does the \$1 billion figure come from? It is \$740 million to 250,000 taxpayers with incomes of over \$80,000.

They added various measures, but we would have preferred that the tax cuts be modified to help low income families. The tax cuts now set out are mostly aimed at high income earners, so much so that the last two budgets gave Canadians earning more than \$250,000 a tax cut exceeding \$9,000 this year; however, families earning approximately \$40,000 will see their income tax lowered by \$300 only.

Furthermore, by doing a better job with the tax cuts, we could have helped families with an income of \$40,000, especially single parent families with two children, immediately. Instead of lowering income tax primarily for the millionaires of the country, if we had aimed at a better balance in our society, these families could have had no federal income tax to pay. This is what I meant when I spoke about redundancy.

• (1530)

I only have one minute left to talk about the other two aspects. The second point concerned the lack of responsiveness toward, for example, what the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development requested unanimously, that is changes to the eligibility rules for employment insurance and more services. As things stand now, only 42% of those contributing to the employment insurance plan can receive benefits when they are unemployed.

Also, there is the indifference with regard to international aid; they are considering an increase of one tenth of one percent when in fact we are already lagging behind. We would need to double the aid we grant just to rectify the situation.

I say the minister tried to do certain things but forgot entire sectors and components of our economy, trucking for example, which has experienced severe losses since September 11. Several companies will soon be bankrupt.

I hope members will ask me some questions so I can talk about the other points I wanted to address.

[English]

Mr. John McCallum (Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am sharing my time with the hon. member for Scarborough Southwest.

I noticed this morning and also in question period that the Bloc was using its time to argue for a common North American currency. Given that focus, I thought I would use my time to argue that the idea of Canada using the U.S. dollar is simply, if the House will excuse the pun, one of the looniest ideas ever to be uttered in this Chamber.

• (1535)

[Translation]

Let me give three reasons why this is a bad idea. It is a loonie idea.

First, I think it is excellent for separatists and therefore bad for us. Second, it is bad for Canadian sovereignty. Third, it is bad for the Canadian economy.

[English]

That is three strikes against it. As we say in English, three strikes and you are out.

[Translation]

Let me deal first with the separatists. After that, I will talk about sovereignty and the economy.

It is obviously not a coincidence if the advocates of this idea are found mainly in the Bloc Quebecois and the Parti Quebecois. Separatists think that if the U.S. dollar were the common currency in North America, there would be no monetary problem if Quebec seceded. We should not forget that, in the last referendum, the currency issue was a momentous one. If everybody shared the U.S. dollar, there would be no problem.

[English]

I am not saying that if there were something good to do we would not do it simply because it was also approved by separatists. However, this idea is also bad from the standpoint of Canadian sovereignty and the Canadian economy. The fact that it is also good for separatists can be seen as a bit of icing on the cake.

I come now to the second argument against it. This has to do with Canadian sovereignty.

[Translation]

The basic mistake Bloc members make is that they figure North America and Europe are more or less similar. Ever since the end of World War II, Europeans yearn for a united Europe to prevent another conflict on their continent.

That is why the Europeans have been willing to create a federation, which naturally entails a common currency. We do not have anything similar in North America. The United States are not interested at all in sharing their sovereignty. It is obvious.

Among the 6 billion people on earth, just a few separatists and a few Canadian economists believe the United States, as the only superpower in the world, would be willing to drop the greenback for some kind of North American euro they would share with their partners north and south of their borders.

[English]

My brother-in-law is American, a very pro-Canadian liberal; after all, he married my sister. When I mentioned to him the idea that we would have something called the amero and the Americans would give up their dollar, he fell off his chair laughing.

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Let us get rid of that idea and call a spade a spade. The notion of a common currency in North America is simply that we in this country would use the American dollar and would have no influence, no control, no role whatsoever in the setting of interest rates, exchange rates or any of that. The fundamental point is that if we were to go that route, we would not be following in the path of Holland, France or Germany. We would be following in the path of Paraguay, Ecuador or Liberia, which are the dollarizing countries, as opposed to the Europeans who are sharing their sovereignty, which is simply not on in a North American context.

My second point is that this would be an enormous loss of sovereignty and a total loss of control over our monetary system, our interest rates, our exchange rates and the disappearance of any lender of last resort function for the central bank.

[*Translation*]

Finally, it is a bad idea not only because it would serve the purposes of separatists and go against the Canadian sovereignty, but also because it would be harmful to our economy.

The other false idea is that if we adopted the American dollar, we would get one American dollar for every Canadian dollar. We would like it to be so, but that would not be the case. If we adopted the American dollar today, we would get 62 American cents for every Canadian dollar.

[*English*]

It is not a good deal to get rid of our Canadian dollars and bring in U.S. dollars when the Canadian dollar is near its all-time low. It is not a good deal at all because we will not get one for one; we will get whatever the exchange rate of the day is.

[*Translation*]

The end point in terms of the economy, and the reason why I believe it is also a bad idea, is that having achieved tax and monetary discipline in Canada, it is a good thing to have some level of liberty and flexibility. In the event of a world crisis, it would be easier to adjust with a flexible rate of exchange than without it.

The best example, as mentioned by the Minister of Finance during oral question period, was the Asian crisis, during which base prices fell throughout the world and countries like Australia, New Zealand, Canada and Chile absorbed part of the shock by allowing their exchange rates to drop. The alternative was a recession and the loss of numerous jobs.

Could other shocks increase the value of our dollar? So, it works both ways. Since we have attained tax and monetary discipline, I believe it to be of significant economic benefit to have this level of flexibility. Not only that, but it is extremely disadvantageous to sell currency at its current price, which is very low. This is what BQ and PQ members are suggesting.

In conclusion, for the three reasons I have mentioned, I do not believe it is a good idea at all. We do not want to help separatists. We certainly do not want to help them through a proposal that would significantly limit Canada's sovereignty. Furthermore, it would be a bad idea from a purely economic standpoint.

•(1540)

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is very interesting to hear the hon. member and new member of the ministry express his opinion on the subject. He is a former economist of repute. The fact that he is showing an interest in this idea and discussing it in parliament is already of interest. If he feels the need to take over from the finance minister, that shows that somehow there is something interesting in there.

I will not repeat every idea he expressed but, since he is making a link between separatist and sovereignist they way he is, I would like to ask him to comment on the fact that Laurent Beaudoin, who is someone well known in Canada as the chairman of Bombardier, and Paul Tellier, who spent almost all his active life in government except following the privatization of CN, therefore two important businessmen, not separatists but recognized federalists, have opinions different from his own.

When he answers like that, I have the feeling he is insulting people like them. He talks about the U.S. dollar. However, what the Bloc proposed was to create a monetary institute with a view to studying, thinking, putting things in perspective, suggesting solutions to deal with, among other things, the degradation of the Canadian dollar.

I will conclude by telling the people on the other side of the House who were making fun of René Lévesque at the time of the 1980 referendum, saying that Quebec would have a 75 cent dollar, that soon they might have a 50 cent dollar.

Hon. John McCallum: Mr. Speaker, I never said that separatists were the only ones in favour of this idea. I said that the six billion inhabitants of this planet included some separatists, some economists and some businessmen who supported it. Thomas Courchene is not a separatist. Herb Grubal, the former Canadian Alliance critic, is not a separatist. There is no law prohibiting the study of these things. Go ahead.

[*English*]

Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, what is the member's title?

•(1545)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): He is the Secretary of State responsible for International Financial Institutions.

Mr. Ken Epp: What a big title for an ordinary man. I would like to ask him a question. He spent a great deal of time talking about the concept of dollarization, combining our currency with that of the United States, and why we should not do it, but he did not spend any time at all talking about how to correct the eroding value of our Canadian dollar, which is happening right now. In fact, under the watch of the Liberals I think it has gone down another 10 cents. It is now hovering just under 62 cents. That is atrocious. That shows a huge erosion of the value of Canadians' assets as measured by our dollar.

What does he propose we should be doing in the country to bolster the value of that dollar on the international market?

The Budget

Mr. John McCallum: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has heard this before, but it needs to be repeated because it happens to be true, and it is the fact that whether we look over the past one year, five years or since 1993, the Canadian dollar has appreciated against most major currencies. The U.S. dollar has appreciated against just about everyone's. It is a question of U.S. dollar strength, not a question of Canadian dollar weakness.

The answer will come back, what does that matter when 85% of our exports go to the United States? My answer is, that is a point, but the reason it matters is that if the basic fact is the U.S. dollar's strength, then the question, the puzzle, should be why the U.S. dollar is so strong against all of our currencies rather than the question, which is not so relevant, being why the Canadian dollar is weak when it really is weak against just the U.S. dollar.

I think the member should focus his attention or his questions on the U.S. dollar's strength. There are various reasons for it. In times of difficulty there is a tendency for all the money to go to the safe haven. That might not last forever, because the U.S. has an enormous current account deficit and it is not clear that it can go on forever.

The basic answer to the member's question is that over the last five years, or one year or two years, you name it, the U.S. dollar has soared, for a variety of reasons, against just about every other currency in the world.

Mr. Tom Wappel (Scarborough Southwest, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are debating the budgetary policy of the government and various things about the budgetary policy of the government, including the dollar. It is all very interesting.

I would like to have a look at the budgetary policy of the government, specifically in relation to the most recent example of that budgetary policy, and that is the budget that was brought down before the adjournment of the House at the end of 2001. Basically I want to examine that budget not in isolation but rather as a continuum of a budgetary policy of the government that began when we were elected in 1993.

The budget does not stand alone. It is the newest piece of a longstanding strategy. That strategy began in 1993 when we were first elected and inherited a budget deficit of \$45 billion. The government was in the hole \$45 billion every year, not a small amount. That took a lot of effort to defeat. We were able, with the help of Canadians, to do so and to balance the budget. That was the first step, namely, to eliminate the deficit. There have been numerous steps subsequent to that and I would like to talk about those as well.

Once the deficit is eliminated, the next step is to start to build a surplus. I would point out that the federal government recorded a budgetary surplus of \$17.1 billion in 2000-01. This is the largest annual surplus since Confederation and the fourth consecutive annual surplus following the surpluses of \$3.5 billion in 1997-98, \$2.9 billion in 1998-99 and \$12.3 billion in 1999-2000.

Those may sound like numbers, but they are factual numbers. That is the important thing to remember. Let us talk about facts: five budgets that have been consecutive surplus producing budgets. No government can say that except this government.

What else did we do? Of course once there is a surplus there are a number of ways to try to spend it. One of the things that can be done

is to try to pay down the debt the country has accumulated in its history. Indeed, that is exactly the second piece of the government's strategy. Net public debt has declined by \$35.8 billion from its peak of \$583.2 billion in 1996-97 and it is currently around \$547.4 billion.

This is from a government that everyone accused would do nothing but spend, never mind get rid of the deficit, never mind pay down some of the debt. Everyone said that all the Liberals would do is spend. In fact that is not the case.

The debt paydown, coupled with Canada's strong economic growth, has resulted in a significant decline in the federal debt to GDP ratio, from its peak of 70.7% in 1995-96 to 51.8% in 2000-01. That is another fact, not speculation, not argument, not debate, but fact, math, and that is something all Canadians can be proud of. This decline in net public debt has resulted in ongoing savings in debt interest payments of about \$2.5 billion each and every year. Of course when debt is paid down there is not as much interest paid and there is more money available because less interest is paid. The amount of every revenue dollar collected by the federal government that is used to pay interest on the public debt declined from 36 cents to 23.6 cents in the last fiscal year. That is also a fact, not bravado. The government is paying down the debt.

What is the next step? Canadians want to be rewarded for the tough times in the good times, so we have given Canadians tax reductions of \$100 billion over five years. This is the largest tax reduction in the history of the country. It is another very important piece of the budgetary strategy of the government. There are three excellent strategies working together.

Unfortunately, the unexpected happened on September 11, put the brakes on a lot of things and caused a lot of problems. We have to adapt, we have to change and we have to be malleable in the face of changing circumstances.

• (1550)

That is exactly what the government has done, particularly with this budget, because what do we need to do after September 11? We need to enhance security. Indeed, the government has enhanced security and specifically has committed \$646 million over five years to enhance our border operations. I will not go into the nitty-gritty, but suffice it to say there is \$0.6 billion to enhance border security.

We are investing in border infrastructure. That makes sense. We heard the previous speakers talking about 80% of our traffic going between Canada and the United States. It is about time that this fact be recognized. The budget provides \$600 million over five years for new border infrastructure programs, which could include new, improved highway access to border crossings, processing centres and the sharing of information and intelligence.

The Budget

The money being spent will not just enhance border security. Someone has to build those highways, put that infrastructure together and get that intelligence information together. That creates and will continue to create jobs. That is the fifth element of the strategy, which is the stimulation of the economy.

Among other things, the tax cuts announced in the year 2000 have demonstrated a \$17 billion benefit to Canadians this year. It will be \$20 billion next year. As well, \$7.7 billion in border infrastructure payments this year will benefit the economy, \$2 billion to the Strategic Infrastructure Foundation to better our roads and highways across Canada will stimulate the economy, and \$1.1 billion to support skills, learning and research will benefit the economy.

Indeed, our research community came to us before the budget. It certainly came to see me, particularly researchers from the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto who asked for more money to keep their top quality researchers. The government listened and in fact received thanks from the research community in Canada for those badly needed dollars.

That is the continuing strategy as most recently reflected by the budget at the end of the year 2000. This government factually has ended 28 consecutive years of deficits. This government factually has produced five consecutive balanced budgets, a first for a federal government in over 50 years. This government has factually paid down almost \$37 billion of the national debt. This government has factually provided the largest tax cuts in Canadian history.

There is more to come.

• (1555)

Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, that was certainly an *Alice in Wonderland* or Harry Potter type of speech. Let us talk about what the true facts are. The true facts are that the government has taken billions of dollars out of the economy in order to do what the member says the government has done.

Let us examine the facts. Thirty billion dollars was taken away from the public service, the RCMP, the military and former employees of CN Rail. How did the government do it? With a snap piece of legislation. There is \$15 billion in overcharges in employment insurance. There is \$45 billion. That is more than what it reduced the debt by and that is only from a small segment of society.

Let us look at the average person. The average Canadian is looking at a 62 cent dollar. In rural areas across the country farmers have to import tractors from the United States because that is where they are made. A U.S. made \$100,000 tractor costs \$170,000 in Canada; this is big equipment. A farm truck that costs \$27,000 in North Dakota, right across from my ranch, costs \$43,000 in Canada. The productivity, the troubles we see in health care and the stresses and strains on our economy are a direct result of that low dollar.

I would like the member to explain to me the fact that his government took such massive amounts out of the country's economy and still we have a 62 cent dollar.

Mr. Tom Wappel: Mr. Speaker, it was not a fodder speech. My handwritten notes are right here. There is no need to make comments

of that nature. If the member wants to talk about facts let us deal with the facts.

I am not a farmer. I did not know that the only place one could buy a tractor was in the United States. I thought tractors could be bought in other countries as well.

We heard the minister for financial institutions say that the American dollar was strong against all currencies. The Canadian dollar is strong. When I went to Australia in 1999, the Australian dollar was 99 cents to \$1 Canadian. Today it is 75 cents to \$1 Canadian. If we buy something from Australia the Canadian dollar is very strong. Let us be realistic.

A principle in physics is that we can neither create nor destroy energy. The hon. member said that the government took money out of programs. If we were to take money out of one program and put it into another it would still be in programs. It would still be used. The money does not evaporate. If it is not used by one department it will be used by another. If it is not used under one policy it will be used under another. The money stays within the general pool.

Of course people can look at the budget in different ways. They can pick at it and pull on different parts depending on the particular history. A year ago the dollar was not at 62 cents. A year from now it may not be at 62 cents. We will have to wait and see. Any number of possibilities could occur.

However, given what I talked about in my speech, overall the strategy has worked. Yes, everybody can do better. No one in this place can say that there is nothing they can improve. The same goes for any government at any time. We are also creatures of the world economy.

Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, does the member feel at all guilty about telling people that the government has reduced the debt?

In 1993, when the Liberals took over, the national debt was \$508 billion. It went up, up and up since 1993 under the watch of the present Liberals to \$583 billion.

In the last five years they have reduced it to \$547 billion. They have reduced it since two years ago but they have not reduced it since 1993. In fact, it is considerably larger, some \$39 billion larger than when they took power.

How does the member feel about telling Canadians that under their watch they reduced the debt when the facts say that they increased it?

Mr. Tom Wappel: Mr. Speaker, I do not know where the member was at the beginning of my speech but it is impossible to reduce a debt if we have a deficit. The first thing we must do is eliminate the deficit. Only after the deficit is eliminated and we start building a surplus can we then begin paying down the debt. There is no magic there and it is not something that one has to be embarrassed about.

Step one was to get rid of a \$45 billion deficit. Only after that was accomplished could we start building a surplus and paying down the debt, which is exactly what we did.

The Budget

• (1600)

Mrs. Carol Skelton (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to the budget that the government brought down in December. What a complete and utter embarrassment to Canadians.

The government has shown that everything is a priority. In saying this, we see that it is evident that the government has no priorities.

The former auditor general has stated that there is a need to weed the garden of government programs, to clear out unnecessary activity. Priorities change and spending must be re-examined. There are certain areas that need immediate attention, such as our armed forces, our justice system, personal income tax, health care and agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, I forgot to mention that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre.

While this budget remarked on a few of the programs, others were completely ignored. The funding offered is incredibly inadequate to the programs that were ignored.

Small business is what drives the country. There is no greater employer than the small and medium size businesses in Canada. Payroll taxes are higher than they have ever been. This tax on business is absolute foolishness on the part of the government.

The government should be doing all that it can to ensure the viability of independent business in the country. What we need is fairness; providing an environment that would enable business to grow, to contribute to the economy, to employ Canadians and to improve their lives.

The recent increase in CPP contributions by employees and their employers does nothing to promote these ideas. The meagre decrease in EI premiums is a slap in the face to Canadians and their employers.

The auditor general has said that the current surplus in the EI fund is far greater than it needs to be. Even in the face of a huge unemployment crisis, there are sufficient funds for the EI program to operate effectively. The auditor general's report shows that EI contributions could be significantly reduced and we would still have a healthy, viable employment insurance program.

In my riding of Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, the top two areas of concern are health care and agriculture. Again, the government has abandoned us. There is no new money for frontline health care. The surgical waiting lists continue to grow. Our residents continue to suffer while waiting for care. The government loves to flaunt Canada as the home of medicare, yet when the system is in need of life support the government refuses to help.

In a budget that is to secure the safety of Canadians, I fail to see how the safety of those waiting for health care has been improved.

The government says that it wants to help retain and recruit family doctors. Canada is facing a crisis in this area. Many physicians are unable to see new patients. What is to become of those people in need of medical attention? There is nothing in the budget that will recruit or retain physicians. Increased payroll taxes, increased airline taxes, no new tax cuts and no funding for frontline health care. If this

is the government's solution to our physician shortage, Canadians should be very worried.

I find it deplorable that the 2010 Olympic bid received greater attention in the budget than the ongoing crisis facing Canadian farm families. Farm families work to feed the world but are struggling to put food on their own tables. The government's treatment of agriculture in this country is embarrassing; 53 seconds in the budget speech. That is appalling. We are a world leader in grain production, yet farm families are forced to fight for every penny.

The government's lack of action in regard to subsidies is killing a national industry. Money handed out in the form of corporate welfare is given without thought or consultation. Hardworking Canadian farmers have the doors to the government shut in their faces time and time again.

Farm families are not asking for ongoing programs consisting of handouts. Farm families are waiting for the government to implement solutions to low grain prices, solutions to inadequate safety net and aid programs, and solutions to transport issues, not this summer but now.

• (1605)

The budget does not mention a plan for agriculture. We have been given no details as to what this plan is or how much money will be involved.

The 53 second mention of agriculture in this budget is not acceptable. It is not surprising, however, in light of the government's track record. If people eat they must support agriculture. Where will the food come from and at what price when Canada's farm industry collapses totally.

In light of the drought situation facing the agricultural industry, farm families are in need of effective and immediate assistance followed by an efficient plan that addresses the needs of this industry.

I will use this opportunity to read the words of some of the farm families in my riding of Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar.

"I apply for all government handouts and I'm tired of it. Every program in the past 10 years has been the same—short term. Does the Government of Canada not see a future in agriculture?"

Another farm family states:

"We've been farming for 40 years and at our age should be able to operate and pay our expenses with our income. This year that will be impossible.... Crop insurance, as it is set up now, is not the answer.... Our son farms with us and now says he is going to throw in the towel. We need help!"

Another farm family states:

"We are in the midst of a severe drought, and the forecast for next year is for the drought to continue.... Farmers and ranchers are the only people getting 1930s prices for our product, but we are paying 2001 prices for our chemicals, fertilizers, repairs, fuel and implements. No other occupation is living on 1930s income. Why do you not see how your government is killing us? Killing our spirit?"

The Budget

The Liberal government appears to be intent on destroying an entire industry and a way of life. Priorities must be evaluated. There is money being misspent on programs and departments that are not essential. This money must be reallocated to critical areas, such as the agricultural industry.

The Canadian Alliance is asking not only for monetary improvements in agriculture but those requiring diplomatic action on the part of the government. There are many areas of concern that would require only action. The long term neglect suffered by this industry must end. We must look at increasing competitiveness in the world market through the continuation of subsidy reduction; improved conflict resolution between Canada and the U.S. markets; reduction of input costs, such as fuel taxes and user fees; and giving farmers marketing choices.

The farm families of this country deserve better than this. It is appalling that a government would treat its own people in such a manner. Does the government expect this industry to recover from low commodity prices and recent horrific drought conditions on its own? If the government closes its eyes will this situation simply disappear? No, it will not. The crisis in agriculture is in need of immediate attention. Canadians deserve a government that cares.

Mr. John Bryden (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Aldershot, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to follow up on the remarks of the member opposite. I would ask her whether or not there is something that the farmers can do themselves?

The reality is that there are drought conditions and low commodity prices. If I understood correctly, the member is asking for a permanent subsidy arrangement that would go over a long term. She shakes her head, and that is fine. Then surely the solution is not only government.

I have had delegations from the prairies to my office. I have learned that there is an unwillingness to take land out of production, for example, when it is very clear that the product is not going to be able to be sold for the cost of production.

Surely it is not just the central government that holds the answer to the plight of the prairie farmers. Is there not something that the provinces and the farmers themselves can be doing about the situation?

•(1610)

Mrs. Carol Skelton: Mr. Speaker, if Canadian farmers take their land out of production there must be some way to give them a living. If they must walk away from their farms and take it out of production, they must go out and get jobs and many of them have one or both partners working off the farm.

I would invite the hon. member to come to my riding of Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar and meet with members of the agricultural community. We have diversified in many ways. Subsidies are not what we are asking for. We want the government to allow us to market our goods and take away the rules and regulations that are holding western Canadian farmers down.

Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am a rancher and my neighbours and friends are farmers and ranchers. Our biggest problem is the federal government not allowing us to have our incomes rise up.

The Pest Management Regulatory Agency under the new health minister is in a shambles. It is one place where if regulations were fixed by the government we could have lower costs for our farmers. The Farmers of North America is an organization that wants to import generic chemicals at a fraction of the current cost in Canada by bringing them in from other countries around the world. These requests and applications have been refused by the health ministry and by the government.

Does the hon. member believe that, on her farm, farms in Saskatchewan and right across the country, these generic chemicals would lower costs? Does she believe the government is hindering this reduction in farm costs?

Mrs. Carol Skelton: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. Yes, most definitely. If we could bring generic chemicals into Canada without government hindrance we would help the economy of western Canadian farmers.

There are government rules and regulations throughout the whole industry which are holding back the whole agricultural community. Western Canadian farmers will not move ahead because of the government's lack of willingness to change some of the rules and regulations.

Mr. John Bryden: Mr. Speaker, in my earlier remark I was not suggesting that farmers quit the land. I was suggesting that farmers should perhaps reduce the number of acres they have under production when there is obviously an oversupply of the commodity that they are growing. Could the member address that aspect of the question rather than the way she did before?

Mrs. Carol Skelton: Mr. Speaker, that might be a good plan as long as it was carried out right across Canada. It cannot be put on western Canadian farmers to take land out of production. It has to be right across Canada.

The government should look seriously at implementing all of its rules and regulations right across Canada and should not single out specific areas. For instance, I would like the name changed from the Canadian Wheat Board to the western Canadian wheat board because it just affects farmers in western Canada. If it was changed maybe we could look at it more seriously. However, all of the rules and regulations must apply across Canada, not just one specific region.

Mr. Larry Spencer (Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to support the motion before us as presented by the Alliance this morning. It is an attempt to call the government to account over the new budget which raised a number of questions and problems.

The finance minister is presenting the new budget as a balanced budget. He continues to claim to do his best to avoid a deficit, but how real is his claim of a balanced budget? He claims that it is not a deficit budget. Is it truly a balanced or non-deficit budget if the government has to borrow \$1.9 billion this fiscal year and \$1 billion in the 2002-03 fiscal year? Having to borrow from private capital markets does not sound like a non-deficit budget to me. Who is the Liberal minister trying to fool?

The Budget

None of us would believe that our own budgets were not in deficit if we had to borrow about \$3 billion to stay afloat for the year no matter what the length of time. We all know that money borrowed is money owed. Money owed is a deficit if that money is required to make it through the fiscal year. Money owed is money already spent. It is a debt to be repaid that was not there at the beginning of the fiscal year. That incurred debt means a deficit to anyone with honest common sense. How can this not be called a deficit?

Under the United States system, as I understand, this would be called a deficit. That is the system that the finance minister chose to refer to some years ago to show that his budget was in fact in a surplus.

A Toronto Dominion economist calls this and the establishment of foundations like the strategic infrastructure fund and the Africa fund fancy accounting footwork. Why do the Liberal finance minister, the Prime Minister and the Liberal cabinet continue to try to hide things from the public? Would it not be nice for once if we could expect some honesty, openness and integrity?

Have the Liberals simply found it easier to run the government through a select inner circle of cabinet members? How is parliament expected to function when the government takes most of its action through a corps of its inner circle and then expects only a rubber stamp approval by the House of Commons? The government continues to abuse its power, not only over members of parliament but over the very people we are all elected to serve.

Our motion before the House today addresses some of the concerns that I referred to in my opening remarks. The motion rejects the government's budget statement because it fails to provide adequately for the national and economic security of Canada: by continuing to underfund Canada's military at the second lowest level of defence expenditure in NATO; by increasing overall spending to nine times faster than the rate of growth in the economy; by failing to reallocate spending from low priority to high priority areas, such as health care and agriculture; by failing to address the long term slide in Canada's productivity and in the standard of living; by increasing payroll taxes in the midst of a recession; and by planning no reduction in Canada's \$547 billion debt.

One of the greatest failures exhibited in the budget that we have identified is the failure to reallocate spending from low to high priority areas such as health care and agriculture. How can any reasonable thinking person believe that the government cannot find one cent of fat to trim from its exorbitant spending?

As Stockwell Day reported, Canadians—

• (1615)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): I realize the member for Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre is a new member but we cannot refer to members by their names.

Mr. Larry Spencer: Mr. Speaker, the former leader of the Alliance said that Canadians were looking for an end to Liberal waste and mismanagement, but they were given more overspending. It has also been noted that since last year spending increased by 9.3% and the economy grew by only 1.1%. The Liberal government has lost control of spending and has failed to meet the needs of Canadians for defence, security, health care and agriculture.

How can Canadians be expected to believe that every loonie of a \$131.5 billion budget is spent on an item equal in importance with the money spent on defence, security, health care and agriculture? Not one single loonie of fat was identified by the Prime Minister out of over \$130 billion. That is absolutely ridiculous.

How much did we as members of parliament spend on our own budgets in 2001? It was far short of \$1 billion. Our budgets are much smaller. We know that we could have saved many dollars had we really tried. We all have much smaller budgets with the exception of some who might own tremendous amounts of property. The propaganda that says there is no fat in this budget, not one loonie that can be cut, is simply the pipe dream of a deluded mind.

Let me tell members what I saw in my hotel room this week. As my program ended on TV, I was flipping with the remote to see what was ending on other channels. I flipped to a channel that shocked me. There was bare skin, lots of it, and not polar bear either. There was bare skin and black leather, chains and those sorts of things, things that I have never seen before with my eyes. I watched the last minute of that show to see the credits. Guess what? That show was paid for by the Government of Canada and our tax dollars. The government is trying to tell us that spending taxpayer money on that kind of garbage is just as important as health care spending. I do not buy that.

The health care system is in a crisis as was explained by my hon. colleague from Yellowhead. Things are so bad that the premiers have given up on the federal government and have decided that they will not take responsibility for making health care a real priority.

Let us forget the rhetoric, but let us not forget the rhetoric that happened during the last election. I wonder if members remember the Liberal accusation that the Alliance would take funding away from health care? Do members understand what I am saying? Do members realize that the Liberals said that we would do what they were already doing?

Agriculture is in a crisis. The drought stricken Canadian farmer is being left to dry up and blow away. The PFRA which handles money to develop new water supplies dried out in the first quarter of the fiscal year.

It is an insult to Canadians to tell us that every loonie in this budget is of equal importance to security, health care and agriculture. It is an insult to be told that there was not one bit of fat in this past budget. It is an insult to be told that we have a budget requiring loans of nearly \$300 billion and still not call it a deficit. It is an insult that the government expects us to believe that it has all of its priorities in place. It is an insult to Canadians to expect them to continue to accept broken Liberal promises.

The Budget

Do members remember the commitment to pay down the debt every year and to allocate what was left over to pay down the debt? Now all of a sudden instead of allocating any kind of surplus to go toward paying down the debt, it has been allocated to those nebulous funds like the Africa fund and this other development fund.

• (1620)

It is an insult to Canadians to accept a 62 cent loonie which may possibly be on the way to a 50 cent loonie. We are insulting Canadian citizens and their intelligence by expecting them to swallow all of this propaganda.

Mr. John Bryden (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Aldershot, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if rhetoric is defined as receiving words without messages, I think we may have just heard a little bit of rhetoric.

I listened very carefully to the member's speech. In fact throughout everything he said, about the only instance of bad public spending by this government was a salacious movie that he happened to catch on TV. I do hope on another occasion he will tell us what that movie is so that we can have a look and judge for ourselves whether it is money misspent.

Other than the fact that he disagrees with the foreign aid as in the Africa fund or the money that is allocated for research in the Canada Foundation for Innovation fund, there are very few specific examples of where he would cut. I would ask him to give us some examples, other than the very few that he has given so far, of where he would cut spending if the Canadian Alliance, perish the thought, should ever become the government.

• (1625)

Mr. Larry Spencer: Mr. Speaker, I do not know where the figure comes from but I am told that the auditor general identified something like \$16 billion that should be looked at.

The hon. member is well aware that I am reasonably inexperienced and new at this. I was also limited to 10 minutes. I can say for sure that there are many areas of government that could cut spending.

For instance in health care I know the inefficiencies are there and that is only a government system. I know it is run by the provinces but there are many cuts the government can make in those areas. There are the kinds of things, for instance the millions or the amounts that are spent on training people how to carry out demonstrations and dissent that the House was involved in at the recent conference of the Americas. There was the conference that belittled the United States and was there in the name of uplifting women. There are those kinds of things.

By the way I did not watch the movie; I only saw the last 60 seconds as it was ending. There was nothing really going on. But those kinds of things are ridiculous and there are plenty of them. I am sure I do not have to detail them for the hon. member unless he has had his head in the sand.

Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I want to comment on the television industry. I received a rather strange phone call from way down in Missouri. I realized that I have some cousins there, some younger and some older. A fine lady who had never met me before asked me, "Why do

you Canadians hate us Americans?" I begged her pardon and she repeated the question. I asked her what gave her that idea and she told me that they have a satellite dish and they watch our television programs. She identified two programs. I told her that Canadians really do not hate the United States and Americans but there are indeed some people who do. What I really wanted to say to her was that our taxpayer dollars produced those two movies.

What does my hon. colleague have to say about that?

Mr. Larry Spencer: Mr. Speaker, of course I did not see those programs to know what to say but this is certainly an area that needs to be looked at. The programs and the things that we do under the title of culture need to be reviewed. I cannot see that it is our place to promote culture and then turn around and say that the money we are spending on these kinds of propaganda productions is equal in importance to taking care of health care, defence, security and agriculture. It is not so.

Mr. John Bryden: Mr. Speaker, I have a follow-up to the remarks of the member for Souris—Moose Mountain.

The Sunday before last the CBC ran a comedy show called *An American in Canada*. It was absolutely hilarious. If the members opposite would like to see an example of public money well spent on Canadian television, I recommend the show to them.

Mr. Larry Spencer: Mr. Speaker, there is some money well spent but it is not all well spent. I can guarantee that.

Mr. Mac Harb (Ottawa Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to participate in the debate on the 2001 federal government budget.

What we have heard from the other side of the House for most of the day is doom and gloom. The reality is that things are not as bad as my colleagues would like Canadians to believe.

In fact, we should look at where we were as a country when the government came to power in early 1993 and where we are now. If we look at what the government plans are in this very latest budget in terms of the future, we can come to the conclusion that Canadians are very well served by the government and by the Prime Minister.

Back in 1993 when we formed the government, the fiscal situation was in a mess. The government deficit was in excess of \$42 billion a year. The debt was way over \$500 billion. The debt to gross domestic product ratio hit 71%. When we compare that to what is going to happen in 2002, the debt to gross domestic product ratio will go down to below 50%.

There was a deficit of \$42 billion back in 1993. Looking at the past five years in a row and what we have now, we have a surplus situation. Last year we were able to put \$17 billion of the surplus into reducing the debt. This gives a pretty clear idea that things are not as bad as my colleagues on the other side of the House would like Canadians to believe.

The Budget

In fact, looking at what happened before the government came to power, 36 cents out of every tax dollar were going out of government revenues in order to service the debt. Today that amount has been reduced to less than 23 cents. By doing so, the government is able to put more money into programs, into projects and into the future of Canadians.

I would therefore say to my colleagues that things are not as bad as they would like to paint them.

Back in the 1990s before the government came to power, there was a huge current account deficit and the foreign debt burden was on the rise on a daily basis. Today we have a huge account surplus, thanks to an aggressive government policy to improve and encourage trade on the international scene. Our foreign debt has fallen from 44% of our gross domestic product to just around 20% of gross domestic product. Things cannot be as bad as my colleagues would like to paint them.

Prior to the 1990s Canada had one of the poorest records on inflation. Inflation was rampant. Today we could attest to the fact that inflation is well under control. It is well above the norm when we compare it to other industrialized partners.

• (1630)

If we look at the interest rates, back in the 1990s before we came to power, this country's credibility and fiscal position on the international scene were in question. Short term interest rates were in excess of 13%. Today short term interest rates are around 2%. That is one of the lowest interest rates in nearly 40 years. Things cannot be as bad as the opposition would like to paint them.

Finally, in the 1990s before the Liberals came to power Canadians had serious concerns about the sustainability and viability of our retirement income system, the Canada pension plan in particular. Today the Canada pension plan is secure and on a strong footing as confirmed by the independent actuarial report that was tabled in the House on December 10, 2001. Things cannot be as bad as my colleagues would like to paint them.

That was then. Let us talk about now. The latest budget the government has tabled in the House in my view is an exceptionally well balanced budget. The budget has taken into consideration not only the present situation Canada is facing on the international scene as well as within the region where we live, but it has also taken into consideration the interests of Canadians. It is a balanced budget because it takes into consideration both the economic security and the personal security of Canadians. In my view and according to my constituents, those two issues go hand in hand. My constituents wanted the government to act on those two issues simultaneously.

As the member for Ottawa Centre where the House is located I was exceptionally pleased when I saw budget 2001 striking the delicate balance between those two issues while maintaining and protecting Canadian values. Let us make no mistake about it; there is no political sovereignty without economic sovereignty. The two go hand in hand.

When 40% of Canada's gross revenue comes from trade, the government has the fundamental responsibility to ensure that our borders are open to ensure the smooth flow of goods and services not only with our partners to the south but with all of our partners around

the world. To ensure the secure flow of goods and services of our products and that of other countries we have to also ensure the secure passage of people in and out of our country. We have to ensure the security of those who live in our country and those who are our neighbours.

To that extent I can say that the government commitment in 2001 to put in over \$6.5 billion to ensure greater Canadian security was the right thing to do. It was the right thing for the government to do to ensure the safety at our airports, so that travellers feel safe when they take airplanes whether for business, personal or leisure travel. In my view the \$2.2 billion was very well invested in order to ensure the security of Canadians and travellers.

• (1635)

The government's commitment of \$1.6 billion for intelligence and policing is a well placed investment. It will ensure the government has the necessary information about potential crimes and terrorist acts that might take place here on our territory or elsewhere that might affect the safety of Canadian citizens and residents. The money is well spent and will be well invested to protect Canadians and Canadian interests.

The government decided to invest \$1.6 billion for emergency preparedness and to support Canada's military, including participation in the international war on terrorism. The money is well spent to protect Canadian values and Canada's position on the international scene as a leading nation not only for peace building but for peacemaking.

The government decided to put \$1 billion into more efficient screening of immigrants and refugees. That also is money well spent.

The budget also allocated \$1.2 billion to create the most modern and sophisticated border possible using state of the art technology to speed legitimate traffic while stopping those who would do our country harm. It is money well spent, particularly when we are dealing with the border between Canada and the United States. Approximately 87% of all our trade is done with our partner to the south. It is only fair to ensure travel at the border goes not only smoothly but securely. The money is well invested in the future of Canadians and in ensuring the security and safety of Canadians.

I will now speak to the future of Canadians on the economic front. We have dealt with security aspects in terms of security for Canadians. Now we will talk about economic security and what the government has done on that front.

In last year's budget the government committed over \$100 billion to a tax plan. In the 2001 budget the Minister of Finance reiterated the government's commitment to fulfill this and proceed with it as planned. This speaks volumes to the government's commitment to enhance the ability of Canadian families to have more disposable income so they can invest it in areas such as the education of their children or other expenditures they may see fit.

The agreements that have taken place with the provincial governments and the territories to reinstate the federal transfer payment in health care and early childhood development total \$23.4 billion. The 2001 budget reiterated the government's commitment to these agreements.

The Budget

Before the government came into power in 1993 the previous government, whose members now sit on the opposition side and who throughout the day have been attacking the present government, initiated the cut to transfer payments to the provinces. If we were to go to the records I am sure we would see that if the plan continued according to the Conservative government of the day, by the year 2003-04 the provincial governments and the territories would get zero transfer payments from the federal government.

• (1640)

Many governments which are of the same colour and philosophy as the government that was cutting transfer payments to the provinces and territories are now speaking out and saying how dare the federal government not put in more money for transfer payments in the area of health.

The federal government's commitment to health care and education is unequivocal. It has been for years. My colleagues on the opposition side will agree that when the federal government used to give money to the provinces for health care or education the provincial governments would take the money and spend it on roads, bridges and everything else but education.

It took the guts of the present government, the Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance and all his colleagues to collectively stand and say it was enough. They said if the provinces and territories wanted transfer payments for health care or education the federal government wanted to make sure the payments went for health care and education.

That was one of the most important things the government has done in the area of health care and education. It is terrific. My colleagues on the opposite side should stand and acknowledge that for the first time in a long time the government was able to stand up for Canadians and say enough was enough. We wanted to be sure that when federal money went toward a program the provinces would give the money to the people for whom it was intended and not spend it on other stuff.

The budget of 2001 reaffirmed a commitment of \$2 billion for infrastructure programs as well as \$600 million for highway rebuilding. The initiatives are important ones. They will help the economic development of our regions, make our highways safer and allow the flow of goods and services on our highways to go even smoother. In the process they will create much needed jobs in our society. I am sure my colleagues on the opposite side will agree the decision of the government was the right one.

I could go on to talk about some of the other initiatives but will say that despite the difficult times we are in the budget was balanced and kept things in perspective. We have a cool head. We know where we were, we know where we are now and we are planning for the future, notwithstanding the tough economic times we are going through.

None of it is of our own doing. An economic turbulence is hitting most of the western world including our partners to the south. We will be affected by it but will come out as strong as we were before. All the proper fundamentals are in place to ensure the economic well-being of our society is well taken care of. The government has continuously done the right thing to ensure the interests of Canadians

are well protected. All the economists, private, public or otherwise, have said in their forecasts over and over again that the health of the nation is solid and will continue to be on a solid foundation this year and for years to come.

On a final note, my colleagues must give credit where it is due. I am sure one of them will stand to ask a question but before asking the question will tell me the government has done a marvelous job over the past six years in trying to do what is right for Canadians and Canadian interests.

• (1645)

Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the expectations are somewhat excessive. However I will dig down deep into the basket of hope and charity and thank the government for not spending more money than it did. I will go that far because the Liberal way when it has a windfall is to figure out ways of spending it. Usually it is directed toward ways of assuring re-election in the next election. The government could have probably spent more than it did. We thank it for at least making a token payment on the debt.

I will talk about that. Near the beginning of his speech the hon. member made considerable comment about the interest payment and the fact that whereas the taxpayer used to pay over 30 cents per dollar it is now around 25 cents or lower.

That is due to two things. First, interest rates are very low. Second, and much more important, government revenue has expanded fantastically. The Liberal government cannot take a great deal of credit for this. It is due to the fact that we are close to our American neighbours and the American economy is taking off. The Liberals cannot take credit for free trade with the United States which they opposed prior to coming to government but on which they are now riding.

With the American economy doing so well and with our trade agreements for which the Liberals can take no credit whatsoever, our country has done well. Government revenue has fantastically ballooned. It would have been total mismanagement not to find extra money. However the interest payments have still not gone down. They are still around \$40 billion a year. The member has overstated all the praises he has given himself.

• (1650)

Mr. Mac Harb: Mr. Speaker, I stand to be corrected. I said the government had paid \$17 billion toward the debt. I am sorry. I was wrong. The government has paid \$36 billion toward the national debt. I am sure my colleague will agree that is no small potatoes.

Notwithstanding that, we must continue to provide the services and programs Canadians expect from their government while at the same time dealing with the elephant that is eating away at the pie and trying to feed the elephant in terms of paying down the debt and the interest on the debt. At the same time we must keep our focus on the future. Surely we would like to see no debt at all. Nonetheless we have a fact before us and must keep our eye on the ball.

The Budget

The speaker from the Alliance who spoke a little earlier wanted the government to spend more money on subsidies. We agree. The government has put a substantial sum of money toward subsidies, be it for farmers, entrepreneurs or those who live in deprived regions of the country. We must do that. We also have a responsibility to keep an eye on the ball, and that is the economic health of the nation.

I am sure the hon. member would agree that only a Liberal can balance those two interests. If we tilted one way and went too far to one side like some of my colleagues want to do, all the people on the other side of the equation would fall off and no one would look after their interests. The government has balanced the interests of Canadians and done so in a compassionate and fair way. At the same time it has done so with reason.

I make no apologies for the fact that the government has been able to do all this while keeping a surplus. I agree with my colleagues that we must have more free trade. That is why the minister responsible for international trade is in the process of negotiating the free trade area of the Americas. It is absolutely marvelous. Let us imagine over 750 million customers who could buy good Canadian products. They could buy softwood lumber, technology products, milk and cheese and other types of products. That is what I call proper vision and clear equilibrium in government action. It is to be commended.

• (1655)

Mrs. Elsie Wayne (Saint John, PC/DR): Mr. Speaker, I do not think the hon. member has listened to the last two auditors general. Those two auditors general have said that the government has cut the budget for the Department of National Defence to the point where it cannot operate any more.

We are sending our men to Afghanistan without proper uniforms. People in Nova Scotia are visiting second hand stores to which the military sold its combat uniforms and offering to buy them for military personnel. How can the hon. member possibly look at himself in the mirror when we have done this to our men and women who are going over there without the tools to do the job?

The auditor general said to give the military the money. It needs \$1 billion every year for the next five years just to stabilize it. However it needs even more than that. Could the hon. member tell me what he thinks we should be doing with our military these days?

Mr. Mac Harb: Mr. Speaker, my colleague made reference to the men and woman abroad. They are to be commended. They are exceptionally well served in the House by the highly qualified Minister of National Defence who not only has been exceptionally forceful in his approach to dealing with the needs of our Canadian military, but is continuously on the lookout for ways to improve the quality of life for our men and women in the military, not only those who are serving abroad but those who are serving in Canada. He is on the lookout for ways to ensure that they have the necessary tools to do the job.

That is why in budget of 2001 a substantial sum of money has been allocated specifically to support our men and women who, to our pride, are serving our country exceptionally well abroad.

There is no doubt in my mind that there is always a need to do more. In every segment of our society we can do more. However I am sure my colleague will agree with me that we have to share the

pie. We have to look at the priorities the government and the country are facing. We have to ensure that the government does what is appropriate, what is possible and what is feasible. Our men and women are exceptionally well served by a government that has been able to respond to their needs and continues to respond to their needs.

I sit on the public accounts committee. My colleague omitted one part of what the auditor general said. The auditor general also said that the government has managed its financial resources well. In the latest auditor general's report it is clear that the government is doing an excellent job in trying to keep its books in order by trying to move from one system of accounting, which is archaic by all accounts, to a modern system of accounting.

The government has established one of the most fascinating and sophisticated information systems that exist anywhere in the world. The auditor general has made reference to that also.

My colleague can say what she wants, but this government has been looking out for the interests of all Canadians, including the men and women who are serving abroad.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Neigette-et-la Mitis, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Hochelaga—Maisonneuve.

I am pleased to speak today during the time set aside for debate on the budget and, more specifically, on the amendment put forward by the official opposition members.

The member for Calgary Southeast, seconded by the member for Edmonton—Strathcona, has moved that the main motion moved by the Minister of Finance be amended by replacing all the words after the word "That" with the following.

I will take the trouble to read this amendment in its entirety, because it is important that Canadians be aware of our reasons for rejecting an amendment.

Recently, a number of people have said to me "But the opposition almost always opposes everything the government suggests". Those are the rules of the game. It is our job to criticize the government's proposals and there are days when we really have no choice but to oppose them. But what is important is our reasons for so often doing so.

People must understand that each of the opposition parties has its own set of values, values of the right, the far right, and the centre, values that are a little more to the left, that are more social, more market-oriented, and that it is these values that serve as our reference points and allow us to judge whether or not we will support a proposal made by the government.

Our Canadian Alliance colleagues put forward the following amendment, and I quote:

That this House rejects the government's Budget statement because its fails to provide adequately for the national and economic security of Canada—

The Budget

The Canadian Alliance feels that the government is falling short. In what way is it failing to provide adequately for the national and economic security of Canada? The Canadian Alliance puts forward its point of view:

—by continuing to underfund Canada's military at the second lowest level of defence expenditure in NATO;—

The member for Saint John just reminded us of the pitiful state in which our armed forces will be leaving the country on February 1. They will be doing so in uniforms that are not suited, without the needed airplanes to transport their equipment, and so on. Tonight's debate will reveal the state of our armed forces leaving for Afghanistan or a neighbouring country.

The Canadian Alliance also criticizes the government for increasing, and I quote:

—overall spending at a rate nine times faster than the rate of growth in the economy; by failing to reallocate spending from low to high priority areas such as health care and agriculture; by failing to address the long-term slide in Canada's productivity and standard of living; by increasing payroll taxes in the midst of a recession; and by planning for no reduction in Canada's \$547 billion debt.

In theory, according to the rules that are normally followed, we must speak to this amendment, but I will refrain from commenting on each of the reasons listed by the Canadian Alliance.

Rather, I have two main comments to make: first, if I were at all prone to depression, I would go home extremely depressed after hearing the speech made by the member for Ottawa Centre. The other comment relates to agriculture and fisheries and oceans.

I see that the government has provided \$5 billion over five years for passenger security. I have yet to see the details of what will be done to protect our borders, particularly the coastal borders, on the sea, both to the east, west and to the north. We travelled to western Canada and realized that a significant part of our border was virtually unprotected and that anybody could cross it.

● (1700)

I am anxious to see the actual measures that will be taken to ensure that our borders are truly secure. It is not enough for the government to make speeches and say it is investing in security. It must also take real action and show what it is really doing in the area of security.

I want to go back to the speech made by the hon. member for Ottawa—Centre. This is a prime example of the thoughtlessness of this government, which always claims to have the solution and to know what is good for Canadians.

However, it is not obvious that the government is listening to Canadians and that it is taking the time to consider the views of the opposition. Let us not forget that even though the government holds a majority of seats, only 38% of Canadians voted for it.

The opposition got the support of 62% of the voters. We represent the views of four political parties with different values, but we have the support of the majority of Canadians. The government stubbornly believes that it holds the magic formula, that it knows what is good for Canadians and Quebecers.

The government has always underestimated its budget surpluses. The government stubbornly refuses to do anything for the health

sector. It is just as aware as we are of what is going on in Canada. It is aware that, since 1993, it has significantly reduced its contribution. It hears the news every day, just like the rest of us. Why does this government remain insensitive to such a basic need in our society?

The government prefers to keep its money and invest it elsewhere. If it can upset people it will. It goes to bed at night thinking: if I wake up tonight, I will find another way of upsetting the provinces and the public. So, the government takes the necessary means to invade provincial jurisdictions.

What did it find the last time? It came up with a new scheme. We wanted the government to increase its contribution to infrastructures, so as to allow the provinces and municipalities to do the same. But instead, it created an organization, a new foundation, to which it will divert funds. We will not be able to know exactly who is spending what and how much it is going to cost to administer all this. This way, the government will be able to get involved directly at the municipal level, through the infrastructures, when it knows full well that this does not come under its jurisdiction. But it does so, nevertheless.

It got elected in 1993 by saying that it was going to scrap the GST. When it saw that it brought in about \$17 billion a year, it changed its mind and decided to keep it. There is a government that operates under false representation.

In 1997, there were more unkept promises.

In 2000, it said that it was going to improve the employment insurance plan. The member who became immigration minister and the other one who became justice minister travelled throughout Quebec telling people to stop protesting, that there was no need for that because they would change the Employment Insurance Act. They promised to do it.

It was just another empty promise. The Employment Insurance Act has not been changed. The only amendments made were the ones intended in the last parliament, nothing more.

Since I am almost out of time, I will add in closing that I do not have much to say about the budget as it relates to agriculture, since there is nothing encouraging for farmers in it, which is very unfortunate.

The Prime Minister has asked his party to hold consultations across the country to develop a new rural policy. That means that money will be spent to send members all over the place to hold bogus consultations. The policy has already been decided upon. Again, the government will try to make people believe that it listens to them. It will be able to say that it struck a committee that travelled for three weeks from coast to coast.

● (1705)

Everything has already been decided upon. The government even hired a new bureaucrat, who comes from the UPA, to oversee the implementation of the new policy. It is just a sham. Again, people are being ignored, which is very unfortunate.

The Budget

• (1710)

[English]

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened with great interest to what my colleague had to say. Although I know of her passionate interest in the people of Canada, their health, their happiness and so on, she paints such a black picture that it is disappointing. I would like to ask her two quite different things.

What does she think about the great increase in research in the budget? This is one way that farmers are benefiting. They are one of the great beneficiaries of investment in research by the federal government. I will use one example which does affect farmers and their families, and that is the culmination of increased spending on health care so that within two or three years the spending on health research has absolutely doubled. What does she think of that? Is that not at least a constructive step?

The second thing is something quite different and that is the wish of the people of Canada to help those people around the world who are less fortunate. There is an assignment in the budget of \$500 million to the Africa fund, to be spent in the anglophone and francophone countries of Africa, with a focus on the needs of children, women and the sick, particularly those with AIDS.

Does the member not at least think, in this pessimistic picture that she paints, that there is something good in those two different things?

[Translation]

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay: Madam Speaker, it is obvious that this thick budget document is not thick in every respect. There are a couple of interesting sentences to be found in there.

The member refers to international aid. Since 1993, this government has made the deepest cuts to the international aid budget. The budget has been reduced by 30%. I am not impressed to see that they have only committed to \$500 million. It is not enough. We have asked the government to increase this amount to 0.7%. At this rate, there will soon be nobody left to be helped on this earth. I think the world is going to come to an end before we get the budget that we agreed to give at the OECD.

I really am not impressed. It is far from enough. We would need billions of dollars. Of the \$500 million, \$100 million has already been promised to Afghanistan. There is therefore only \$400 million left. Things like this do not impress me.

As far as research is concerned, farmers are said to be the winners. I have here some criticisms made by western producers. They are not too crazy about the last budget. I have their comments here. I think that before we spend money on research in the agricultural field, it might be a good idea to find a way to ensure that people can earn a living on the farm, particularly in view of the drought that affected western Canada. When we look at all that happened in agriculture, we soon realize that research might be very nice, but people need to eat before we conduct research.

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonnette, BQ): Madam Speaker, I must say to the previous speaker that I am very happy to see she has not lost her alertness, nor her insight. The Bloc Québécois caucus as a whole agrees with my colleague's comments.

We would search in vain for examples of such a terrible budget. Almost everybody criticized it. Who is satisfied with this budget? Certainly not the agricultural sector, certainly not the health care sector and certainly not the chambers of commerce. That budget shows the scope of the government's complacency. The worst part is that the government could have used its enormous budget surplus.

I am not talking about the dodging the minister of Finance has been practicing since 1994 in order to constantly underestimate the surplus at the end of each year. That verges on dishonesty.

As far as employment insurance is concerned, several stakeholders, analysts and players working in the field with the unemployed used the words theft and misappropriation. I think that is the reality.

I want to focus more specifically on health. We all know that health is not a partisan issue. There are facts that can be objectively observed. What are they? In Canada, as in Quebec, the issue is no longer senior citizens, but rather very old people.

Madam Speaker, if you do not smoke too much and if you do not drink too much, and I know that is the case, and if your lifestyle is reasonable enough, you can expect to live to be 80, 83 or 84 on the average. Women live longer than men because, it seems, they are more in touch with their emotions.

All this to say that there is a new phenomenon: the very old people. People are living longer, and they want to stay in their communities longer. Not only are people living longer—I know that our physician colleague is not highly critical of his own government, but I am told he was an excellent doctor in the Maritimes—but they want to live at home with the help of what are called natural caregivers. This means the health system needs to be reorganized. The health system needs to be reorganized, keeping in mind that the new technologies are going to require additional funds. I will give an example.

First of all, as we know, our health system was put in place just after the second world war, but mainly in the 1960s and 1970s. The LaMarsh report proposed a public health system for Canada. Having a private system was not of any interest, although now or shortly, we will read the Mazankowski report, written in western Canada, which proposes privatization. Essentially, however, the bulk of our system is public in nature.

I would remind hon. members that the federal government's approach, its sole direct responsibility in this, should be health services for military personnel and aboriginal people, quarantine and approving drugs. As for the rest, the major challenges of the health system must be met by the provinces.

What is federal responsibility is to ensure the fiscal balance we are entitled to expect between resources available in the provinces and those available on the federal level.

The Budget

The premiers met in Vancouver, in a beautiful province. It is special in that a person can be on the ski slopes and at the shore on the same day, which is certainly not the case in Montreal. So, the premiers met in B.C. for an objective analysis of the situation.

Speaking of the premiers, the outcome of the conference that I am going to tell you about was not just the work of the Parti Québécois and Bernard Landry. It was all the premiers, the socialists in Saskatchewan, the Conservatives in Nova Scotia, all of them. Together they spoke out against the lack of federal government support.

In the 1960s, when the public health plan and the federal government contribution were developed, it was agreed that the plan would be equally financed by both governments. Nowadays, for every dollar spent in the health sector, the federal government only contributes 14¢.

How is it that there is not one member in the Quebec caucus of the Liberal Party that has enough backbone to take a critical look at the federal government's lack of responsibility? It is incredible. It is like being in a sad movie entitled *The Silence Of The Lambs*. There is not one member in this government, and certainly not one from the Quebec Liberal caucus, that can shake this government and say "You have enough financial resources, do your share."

• (1715)

There is a way to respond to a consensus from the provinces. Is there an area less prone to partisanship? What are our fellow citizens expecting from parliamentarians, in Ottawa or in Quebec City? What more than a viable health system? The provinces have taken their responsibilities. Eight of the ten provinces have created working groups, and I am talking here to the member for Brome—Missisquoi to make sure that he realizes that.

Quebec has done so with the Clair report, and I could table the relevant information in the House. The provinces are ready to reorganize the health system to ensure that it is closer to the people, that people can remain in their communities and that the new technologies will allow them live as long as possible with as few disabilities as possible.

I would like to share with the hon. members a table that has been going around and was adopted by all the premiers. Provinces went from an investment in 1994-95, when all the investments made by the provinces in the area of health are added — and I mention this for the information of the hon. member for Brome—Missisquoi, whom I want to congratulate for his new responsibilities. I know he will carry them out very seriously, but I would ask him to be a little bit more critical with regard to his government, because up till now his silence has been particularly incriminating. In front of a court of justice, we could not say about him that he is a feisty litigant; we could say that he is part of those slightly too numerous invertebrates that remain silent when the time comes to stand for the interests of Quebec.

In 1994, \$48 billion was invested by all of the provinces in the area of health. In 2001-02, the investment has grown to \$67 billion. If the trend holds, if the Quebec government wanted to provide the same services, if all Quebecers were to benefit from the same

services that were available last year, the budget should be increased by 5%. That growth will continue.

That is why, if the provinces do not get additional resources now from the federal government, surely the viability of the health system is at risk.

So it is that all the premiers, regardless of their political allegiance—including the Conservatives in New Brunswick, the people in Newfoundland and Labrador, the Premier of British Columbia and the Premier of Quebec—said the same thing. Our Prime Minister displayed his proverbial subtlety and said "We are not putting in one more penny". This is how these people understand federalism: the resources are in Ottawa, while the needs are in the provinces. The federal government is using its position of power to avoid any dialogue and to turn a deaf ear to the unanimous needs of the provinces.

It uses its despicable position of authority, its power to step in to avoid meeting the legitimate needs of the provinces. Let us not forget that since 1993-94, when the programs were merged, when a new program was set up, when the government abolished the old Canada assistance plan to create a single system, when the Liberals took office, cuts totalling exactly \$24 billion have been made in transfers to the provinces, for health alone. I am not talking about cuts to income security and post-secondary education. The Liberals cut \$24 billion, including \$1.8 billion that was allocated to Quebec on a yearly basis.

Madam Speaker, I believe you would find that there is unanimous consent of the House to let me continue my speech.

• (1720)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): Is there unanimous consent to allow the member to continue his speech?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Robert Lanctôt (Châteauguay, BQ): Madam Speaker, to allow my colleague to continue, I will ask him a quick question so he can give us more details with regard to the \$24 billion in cuts.

We know what 50% coming from the federal government represented for Quebec in the 1970s, compared to only 14% today. I would ask my colleague to continue his wonderful speech and to show how disastrous these cuts in health care funding were, even though the government seems to find this amusing. It even said before the conference started that there would be no additional funding.

• (1725)

Mr. Réal Ménard: Madam Speaker, you can see how it pains me to answer this question. Essentially, if I were asked to give the best example of this government's lack of sensitivity, I would have to say that it would be in the area of health care.

Let us not forget. For Quebec alone, from 1994 to 2002, the federal government reduced its contribution by \$1.8 billion. This is the amount that Quebec could have used in the area of health care, but never received.

The Budget

Allow me to describe how that could have been used. We have done the math. This amount could have been used to hire 5,000 additional nurses. It could have paid for at least 250 more scanners.

So my colleague's question leads me to say that taxpayers who send their money to Ottawa do not receive their fair share in return to ensure services for the number one concern of most people: health.

I am pleading with members of the Quebec caucus of the Liberal Party to intervene and ask the Minister of Health to reinvest in the system.

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened with great interest to what the member said and to his discussion of the changes since 1993. There is a very easy way of solving his problem. He pointed out that there had been cuts.

We can do this quite easily. If the government could borrow \$42 billion this year from the markets, we could give Quebec the \$1 billion or \$2 billion that the member wants for health care. We could give the \$2 billion or \$3 billion that the member over there wants for defence. We could give another couple of billion dollars here and another couple of billion dollars there and we would still have about \$20 billion left.

The Liberal government inherited a \$42 billion shortfall in 1993. We have to remember that when the Liberals came to power, the government was spending \$162 billion and was only taking in \$120 billion. It was not easy but we confess and take great pride that in the most caring way possible the Liberals eliminated the annual borrowing and adding to the debt of \$42 billion.

Since that time, what have we increased most quickly? We have not increased spending within the federal government. We have increased transfers to the provinces. Within those, what have we increased most quickly? We have increased transfers specifically where we could for health care. We know some provinces have not been spending the money, which has been transferred, properly on health care.

Does the member recommend that we go to the markets today and borrow \$42 billion again, as the government was doing in 1993 when we came in, to solve the problems which he describes?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Réal Ménard: Madam Speaker, the government has some nerve to say in this House that it has balanced the budget without affecting the viability of the health care system. We know that 70% of the cuts made by this government since it has come to power have been made on the backs of the provinces. This has been calculated and documented.

I would like to remind the House that the ten premiers did not ask the federal government to run up a debt, nor to borrow money on the international market, but to use its surplus for real needs, to reform the health care system where necessary, with the provinces, who are responsible for the people's basic needs and to ensure that the framework remains viable.

I challenge the hon. member to find one single quote of a premier inviting the Prime Minister to borrow from financial markets. The

employment insurance fund and the available surplus are sufficient to meet the premiers demands.

[*English*]

Mr. John McKay (Scarborough East, Lib.): Madam Speaker, bon anniversaire. I am pleased to have this opportunity to enter into this debate today.

Last year was clearly an extraordinary year by anyone's standards. No one in this House thought we would celebrate the first anniversary of our return to parliament by introducing a budget emphasizing matters of security, policing, intelligence and things of that nature. Little did any of us think that we would be dealing with bills such as Bill C-36 and Bill C-42. None of the parties in the House ran on those kinds of platforms, which challenged the civil liberties of Canadians and re-profiled fiscal priorities to security issues in precedence to all other priorities. As they say, then was then and now is now.

This budget is a product of our times and I doubt it would have been the first choice of the Minister of Finance nor of the Prime Minister had they been presenting this budget on September 10 rather than on December 10.

The budget will be judged by how well it responds to these extraordinary demands, yet maintains a core of fiscal sanity, which seems to be somewhat absent from members opposite, and keeps the country moving in the right direction.

Staying out of deficit financing is the right direction. Maintaining a package of tax cuts is the right direction and a key signal for Canadians. Reducing our foreign financing requirements is also the right direction and will allow the Government of Canada far more flexibility.

I would like to comment on three areas where the government has succeeded and those three areas where the government of Ontario has shown its ineptitude. The first is the area of debt reduction; second, tax cuts; and third, the area of infrastructure, particularly research funding.

In 1996-97 the government arrested the steady increase of debt; debt piled on debt, deficit piled on deficit. When it was finally stopped, the debt was \$583.2 billion, an extraordinary sum by anybody's standards. However by rigorous discipline and a recovering economy, the government recorded five straight years of surplus which reduced the national debt by \$35.8 billion. The national debt now stands at \$547 billion, which still is an extraordinary sum of money. Of that \$547 billion, \$546 is market debt and the rest is non-market debt.

The debt to GDP ratio was reduced from 70.7% to 51.8%. It is reasonably anticipated that by the end of this mandate we will be well under 50% in our debt to GDP ratio. The market debt has been reduced from 57.8% down to 42.3%. This government should take some pride in these significant accomplishments and, indeed, all Canadians must take pride in them.

The Budget

In real terms, this means that the first claim against government finances, in other words interest paid on our debt, is now down from 36 cents of every dollar to its lowest level in years of 23.6 cents. Part of this success is due to good management and part is due to control on program spending. A significant amount of this success has to do with the fact that we have enjoyed a good economy over the last number of years, the gross domestic product has risen and therefore revenues have risen with it.

None of those elements however are assured in the next fiscal year. The Minister of Finance has said that the country is in good shape to weather this economic storm, and he is right. The fundamentals are a great deal better.

• (1730)

We have reduced debt, our debt to GDP ratio is going in the right direction and we have control over the nation's finances, unlike where we were when we entered into the last recession.

However if it keeps raining, Canada will still get wet. Our economy will contract and there is little if anything that a minister of finance can do about it. The only thing a minister of finance can control is program spending. Program spending has fallen from 16.4% of GDP to 11.3% of GDP. Still there are areas that desperately need to be addressed. One of those is in the area of new infrastructure.

The budget created a \$2 billion strategic infrastructure foundation to leverage public and private sector money for major projects across the country to meet the essential infrastructure needs of the 21st century economy. I suggest that is a good idea. This complements the \$600 million border infrastructure program announced in the budget and the \$2 billion infrastructure program announced in the previous budget to rebuild and renew the country's infrastructure in partnership with the provinces, municipalities and \$600 million in the highway budget also announced in the budget of 2000. Those are things we cannot simply neglect.

The second area of interest in the infrastructure spending had to do with new money on research. I noticed my colleague from Peterborough picked up on that.

The government is providing universities with a one time payment of \$200 million to support the indirect costs of research. Again I suggest that is a good idea. It increases funds for the National Research Council, for councils such as the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.

I have some hope that my own university, the University of Toronto at Scarborough, will see some direct benefit out of those new funds.

These are priorities that make sense; reduce debt, stage manage tax cuts and spend in areas that will give meaningful returns to constituents and the people of Canada. The contrast however to the government of Ontario is painful.

• (1735)

The government of Ontario seems to think that it can pursue tax cuts in priority to all other priorities. As a consequence, it has arrested its own revenue stream, has limited its involvement in its

own areas of jurisdictional authority such as health and education and then has the unmitigated gall to call upon the federal government for more revenues to backfill for its own reduced revenues.

The Harris government will run a deficit this year. It is AWOL on certain of its social responsibilities, those that are clearly within its jurisdiction. The example I have put forward is housing. Within my riding that is not an area that has been addressed during the entire period of time that the Harris government has been in power. Simultaneously, it is continuing to add to the provincial debt while virtually all other provinces, including that of the previous speaker from Quebec, are going in exactly the opposite direction.

I would suggest that regrettably Ontario is ceasing to be a meaningful partner in Confederation. All the other provinces and the country are going in one direction and Ontario is going off the cliff in the other.

I say to Premier Harris and those who wish to succeed him, please get with the program. The program is debt reduction, managed cuts and strategic investments. It is not tax cuts, tax cuts and tax cuts.

In this year alone the government of Ontario has forgone revenues in the amount of \$10.7 billion. That is an enormous sum of money, but because of its commitment to tax cuts as a priority over all other priorities that is the amount of money that the Ontario government has forgone out of its own revenues.

It no longer lies in the mouth of Mr. Harris or any other finance minister from the province of Ontario to ask the federal government to pony up some more money. If they really want more money, why do they not deal with their own tax structures?

In addition to the fiscal insanity that goes on in Ontario, there has been no meaningful debt reduction. I will read from the budget tables of the Ontario government.

Starting in the fiscal year 1997-98, the debt was \$112.7 billion. It rose to \$114.7 billion the next year, then reduced slightly to \$113.7 billion and hopefully will be down to \$110.6 in its budget.

• (1740)

Over the course of the last five fiscal years the province of Ontario has knocked off a total of approximately \$2 billion in debt. That is hardly meaningful for the largest province in the nation. It is hardly meaningful for the engine that drives the country's economy. It pales in comparison to the \$35.8 billion the federal government has taken off the national debt.

Then of course there is the program spending. It is only going to get into program spending if the federal government puts up all the revenues. Let me understand this picture: We reduced the revenues that we were possibly going to get this year by \$10.7 billion, then we do not apply anything to debt reduction and now we want the federal government to pony up for all the shortfalls in the programs.

The Budget

I thought it would be interesting to talk about what the federal government actually gives to the province of Ontario. There are quite a number of transfers the province receives from the federal government. The first and most obvious one is the Canada health and social transfer. Then there are the Canada health and social transfer supplements which in Ontario's case were just under \$1 billion last year. There are tax transfers and money for social housing, student assistance and medical equipment. These are moneys that have not been drawn on but are available to be drawn on. There are Indian welfare services, bilingualism development, employability assistance for people with disabilities and moneys for the justice system.

If we add all of those moneys up and compare that with what the program spending is, we get a very interesting pattern, again using the same five year segment.

Ontario program spending in 1997-98 was approximately \$47.7 billion. Of that program spending, about 22% came from the federal government, hard cash, hard tax contributions in the form of tax points. The next year program spending went up to \$48.7 billion and the federal government increased its contribution to program spending for the province of Ontario to 22.2%. The next year, 1999-2000, program spending was up to \$52.4 billion with the federal government contributing approximately 24% of all program spending. The following year there was \$52.1 billion in program spending with over 25% of all moneys spent by the province of Ontario originating with the federal government.

In this fiscal year the projected budget spending will be \$54.1 billion. Almost 27% will come from the federal government.

In the course of that five year period, the federal government's contributions to the budget of the province of Ontario has gone from just under 22% to just under 27%, about a five per cent increase. To put it in terms of dollars, the total increase in spending has gone up from \$47 billion to \$54 billion, for a total increase in spending of \$6.4 billion. In the same period of time the federal government's transfers have increased from \$10.4 billion to \$14.5 billion, for a total increase of \$4.1 billion. Rough math says that pretty well 66% of all fresh dollars being spent in the province of Ontario come originally from the federal government.

In 2001-02, federal transfers are providing \$1.1 billion of the \$1.2 billion increase in federal health care spending.

● (1745)

We get a very tiresome rant from the premier and ministers from the province of Ontario that the federal government is not doing its share, that whenever money is discussed the federal government goes to the washroom or some other place. Agreements have been entered into by the provincial governments, including the government of Ontario, as late as September of last year. There is a recognized fiscal screen that all the provinces can rely on, yet it is never enough and it never will be enough.

We start to think that possibly there is a management problem, particularly in the province of Ontario. When money for medical equipment actually sits in bank accounts and those bank accounts are not drawn upon, we say that maybe it is time for the provinces to get their act together and start to manage the health care system.

We have to wonder. When I go home to my constituency I talk to my kids. I find out I have to pay for things they were formerly getting for nothing in school as part of the tax moneys I provide. I now have to pay a second time to cover specific things to help out my kids at school.

The education system is in a bit of a mess. The health care system is in a bit of a mess. There is a great rant about the justice system, that throwing people in jail for longer works.

We say these are areas of provincial jurisdiction and management. In all cases it appears to be somewhat chaotic and yet the provinces continue to ask the federal government for more money. Even when the federal government gives them more money, as was demonstrated in my tabling of this material where we are responsible for 64% of all program spending increases in the province of Ontario, we have to ask what is the management problem.

The federal transfers provide \$1.1 billion of the \$1.2 billion of Ontario's health care spending increase. We look at the budget line for health in the province of Ontario and see that it goes up by \$1.2 billion. That is what it did in the last fiscal year. It was a jump of \$1.2 billion, not an insignificant sum of money. Then we look at where the money came from and realize that \$1.1 billion of that \$1.2 billion came directly from federal transfers. The federal government is responsible for 91.7% of all increases in the health care spending in the province of Ontario for the fiscal year 2001-02.

We have to wonder when we play out these figures and look at how the province of Ontario manages its finances and the federal government manages its finances whether they are on the same plane. There is virtually no debt reduction in the province of Ontario. The program spending is in a bit of a mess. If the federal government managed its affairs in the same way as the province of Ontario manages its affairs, we would have skyrocketing debt, the program funding would be in desperate need of proper funding and the crown jewel of the province of Ontario's fiscal plan, that is tax relief, would be in jeopardy.

The contrast is painful. Under other Conservative regimes, for instance, Robarts and Davis, Ottawa could reasonably expect fiscal prudence. It could reasonably expect some loyalty to the overall goals of the nation. Under the present government of Ontario, we have neither.

● (1750)

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore, NDP): Madam Speaker, the budget was brought down late last year and at the same time the government introduced a new form for those 106,000 people with a disability tax credit. Basically it tells people who are missing a leg or an arm, or people who need a hip replacement and can barely walk 50 metres on a flat surface with a device, that they are no longer disabled.

I would like the member to explain this to my constituents, Ralph Manuge, Michael O'Halloran, Ruth Oulton and Philip Gudger. Mr. Gudger is missing a leg and the new form indicates that he is no longer disabled. The fact is the tax credit that he got was only \$800 a year. With that he bought new shoes, he had to buy a special vehicle, and he had to get certain clothes. The government is taking money out of the most vulnerable in our society so it can balance its books and spend it on other items that are not necessary.

The Budget

I would like the member to stand up on behalf of his government and speak to these four people who are watching now. Tell them why the government is taking money away from the most vulnerable in our society.

Mr. John McKay: Madam Speaker, the hon. member linked two inconsistent thoughts.

The first issue is that of the disability tax credit and the requirement on the part of Revenue Canada for a person to prove that he or she still has a disability. There are certain instances in which this does seem to be a logical absurdity because people do not grow legs. I agree with him on that point.

With respect to taking money from the vulnerable in society, I do not think he was listening to my speech for the last 20 minutes. Frankly the government has been more than responsible with respect to the people who are vulnerable in our society. In my province if it were not for the federal government there would be no increases in social housing. There would be no money for the homeless. There would be no money for health care. Whatever increases there are in the health care budget they come directly from this government. I reject absolutely any concept that this government does not care for vulnerable people.

I say to the hon. member that he has linked two irreconcilable thoughts.

Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, I also have great concern for the way the government has misused its money and has not budgeted properly.

I remember reading that back in 1990 the Liberal government and the other parties in the House promised to eliminate child poverty. Statistics keep coming back saying that child poverty is worse than it has ever been before. If the government has everything so right, why is child poverty increasing in this country?

Mr. John McKay: Madam Speaker, it was an all party resolution of this House that the issue of child poverty be addressed.

The hon. member should take a very careful look at the \$23.2 billion transferred to the provinces over the course of the next five years of which \$2.2 billion is for the reduction of child poverty. The hon. member for Don Valley West as the chair of our children's caucus can take a great deal of credit in the fact that the government addressed that issue in the whole rearrangement of fiscal transfers and moneys that came up with the provinces in September last year.

The government has addressed in some measure, but not completely by any means, the issue of child poverty.

Mr. Svend Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Madam Speaker, the hon. member has spoken and rightly so of the devastating impact of some of the Conservative policies under Mike Harris in Ontario.

I come from the province of British Columbia. I can tell the member that while those policies have certainly had a destructive impact in Ontario, what we are seeing in British Columbia is absolutely incredible. It is unbelievable. There is the massive slashing of social programs, the contempt for collective bargaining rights and freedom to negotiate collective agreements, the attacks on

the environment, on equality programs, on aboriginal programs. It is a very black time in British Columbia now.

I want to ask the member a question in the context of that. Obviously the member for Vancouver East and myself, as the two representatives of the New Democrats in that province, are going to be called upon even more now by those who are affected by these destructive policies, particularly in areas such as housing, homelessness, poverty and child care.

When is the federal Liberal government finally going to reinstate support for co-operative housing in this country? The member represents Scarborough, an urban community with significant co-op housing, but some time ago the Liberal government got out of co-op housing. Now we are into an era of surpluses.

When will the Liberal government get back into co-op housing and provide significant national support, not just for ongoing costs of co-op housing but for building affordable co-operative housing?

● (1755)

Mr. John McKay: Madam Speaker, first of all may I say that I have nothing but sympathy for Premier Campbell in inheriting a fiscal mess. Regrettably, British Columbia did not enjoy the times of prosperity as did other provinces. The fiscal mismanagement under the previous NDP government has left Premier Campbell in an awkward situation.

I remind the hon. member that it was this caucus that drove the issue of homelessness and affordable housing. It resulted in the appointment of the Minister of Labour to supervise that portfolio and the allocation of \$753 million over three years for that initiative. I take some pride in the fact that this member from Scarborough and other members from the GTA caucus had something to do with that initiative.

The second point has to do with the platform commitment which was put into the last budget, namely \$680 million over the course of four years for affordable housing. Again that was driven by this caucus.

Before I go to the issue of co-op housing and the final point, I notice that the province of Ontario has still not signed on whereas all the other provinces have signed on for that social housing program.

There are three kinds of co-op housing. There is federal co-op housing, mixed co-op housing and provincial co-op housing. If members want a wonderful contrast on how to do business and how not to do business, the federal co-op housing has in fact been saved. It is being administered by the federal government. The provincial co-op housing over which we do not have any control is a mess. It is being sold off into the open market. That reduces people's ability to live in a certain kind of lifestyle which they would like to live in.

The area where we have been able to save some has been in the mix of federal and provincial co-op housing. It is the position of this caucus and the government that we wish to save that stock.

The Budget

I hope that some money will be profiled for the issue of co-op housing. I hope that the government gets back into the business and I see that as a reasonable position to take given the absolute absence of responsibility on the part of the Harris government.

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened with great interest to what my colleague had to say. One of the unfortunate things about these debates is that the opposition insists on treating the budget simply as a snapshot of the nation's finances. It is in a certain sense a snapshot of the finances, what the finances were like at a very particular time. In reality it is one frame out of thousands of frames in a moving picture of the nation's finances.

If members look at it that way, starting away in the past and then projecting forward to the future, they will get a very different view of the government than the nit picking that we get when they view it as just a snapshot.

The way to judge a government is on its investments, particularly its investments in people in difficult times. The member referred to higher education and research. The government started making those investments in people all across Canada even in times when things were very difficult and when there was still a deficit. For example, the millennium scholarships were developed, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research had their funding doubled and redoubled and—

• (1800)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): The hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake.

Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, today we are debating the budget which was presented in December 2001. We are using very large figures in this debate, quite often in the billions of dollars. We must bring this debate down to the level affecting the average Canadian. Government members have said that a budget is not just a single snapshot but should be a snapshot of budgets and government programs over time.

I am old enough to remember the 1970s. The Canadian dollar was worth \$1.09 compared to the U.S. dollar. There was no debt in Canada. Canadians were prospering and moving forward as a strong united country. We had a military capable of going overseas, whether to the Middle East or to other countries, and being effective because it had good equipment.

That speaks to the position we are in today. Canada has a military incapable of flying over to the Middle East because of insufficient transport. Our troops have insufficient uniforms and equipment. That is the snapshot Canadians are looking at. The progression of time has seen this country go downhill through successive excessive spending and wasteful practices of both the Liberal government and those Progressive Conservatives sitting down on that side of the House.

I would like to talk about the individual Canadian at this time. I just got off the phone with one of my constituents whose child is in the military. Even though this youngster is in his twenties, he is still considered as that mother's child. She called me because she is concerned. Her son, along with many hundreds of other sons and daughters, is going over to Afghanistan. They will be leaving Friday or this coming Monday. Their duty is to protect and guarantee the

security of Canada as well as guarantee and protect the individual security of each and every Canadian.

This mother told me that uniforms are a big concern to our troops. In her mind there is no reason why, with the massive surplus and the money rolling into Ottawa, 750 Canadians cannot have desert camouflage of a suitable colour. Not only is this going to be a safety issue for these young Canadians, but it is also a matter of dignity. Our armed forces will not be equipped and dressed according to what every other country is providing for their troops.

The Coyote vehicle is going over there. During a war situation vehicles often must have a camouflage put over them. Do members know what our Canadians are being asked to put over their Coyotes? I suppose they could take some needles and sew up individual blankets provided by the defence minister and put them over their heads. They could sew a bunch of those together. It is my understanding from my conversation with this constituent that the camouflage to be put over these vehicles is either green or white. There is no reason for that.

The Canadian war stock must have beige coloured camouflage gear. I do not know if that has been explored, but it should be because the safety of our young people is of paramount importance. The budget should have provided money to equip our troops to effectively do their job and put them in the best position possible.

• (1805)

The budget and the amount of money the government has had over the years has been incredible. I mentioned earlier today that \$15 billion of the excess collected for employment insurance has just disappeared into thin air. It was sent here by workers and their employers as an insurance program. It went straight into general revenue and was used for government programs. It is money that should have been left in the economy.

There was \$30 billion in an account for retirement purposes for the military, the RCMP, former Canadian National employees and other public servants. That \$30 billion is gone.

The government talks about reducing the debt. It has done so on the backs of Canadians and in a deceptive way. It was a deceptive way of taking money that came in for other programs, paid by Canadians who thought they were going to get value for the money but who got nothing out of it. The government simply has misused it.

The government has been trying to point out that we are in such a strong economic position. The strength of our economy is reflected in our 62 cent dollar. I can go back to the times when Canada had a true, strong dollar equivalent or greater than that of the United States.

The budget had some fine words regarding agriculture contained in a paragraph or two. It said how the government was going to fully fund programs of which we have no details. It was going to help farmers move beyond crisis management, which are the buzz words generated at the meeting of the agriculture ministers in Whitehorse. This movement beyond crisis management seems to be moving a lot like a glacier. It is moving so slowly that it is grinding farmers down into rubble below this glacier of inaction by the government.

The Budget

Farm families continue to have to fight foreign subsidies, in essence to a great extent on their own, by holding off farm jobs. The disastrously low world commodity prices, as we know, are in fact caused to a great extent by the subsidies that other countries pay their farmers which causes massive overproduction.

The five year plan the federal agriculture minister is pushing was brought up again in Toronto. Where are the details? Farmers are getting ready and are ordering seed. They are doing all the things that have to be done for this summer's crop and they need to know the details regarding our agriculture programs.

Some would say that there a few programs working right now, but in business one plans not for right now but for the future. Our ministers need to tell farmers what programs will be in place two and three years down the road. Why? The answer is very simply because the Farm Credit Corporation and Canadian banks want to know what the situation will be with regard to farm programs two and three years down the road.

I had a call today from a farmer down in Tupperville. He was expressing grave concern because the banks in that farming area of Ontario are refusing credit to farmers and they are also moving on farms that have insufficient income to keep the farm going. Farmers are simply asking for farm programs that actually work, that keep commercial farmers going. That is what we are hearing from Ontario. They are also concerned about the drought the same as we are in other parts of the country.

•(1810)

Over the past year the Canadian Alliance has brought forward to parliament many ideas and suggestions that the government could have used to give immediate assistance to farmers. It was not necessarily subsidy assistance. It could be many things, like fixing up the Pest Management Regulatory Agency.

Every farm group in the country, including the nursery producers in the province of Ontario, have said that unless something is done with the Pest Management Regulatory Agency it will go downhill. The use of environmentally friendly pesticides that are produced in other countries and which have been certified through a scientific analysis as being good for the environment and good for agriculture are not available in Canada.

It is not only that but there are many cheaper generic chemicals that are in other countries that farmers in North America would like to bring into the country. What stops them? The regulations by the Canadian government and inactivity of the Pest Management Regulatory Agency.

Why could farmers not have the freedom to market and sell their own wheat and barley? No, farmers must sell their products through one monopoly marketing agency. The government says that it knows what is best for the farmers. Those are two real good suggestions.

I have another suggestion with regard to heavy taxation. Why does a farmer have to pay the four cents federal excise tax on farm fuels?

I think it was the member for Malpeque in Prince Edward Island who pointed out very clearly that the realized net income of the Canadian farmer is just a little over \$13,700. If somebody is making

\$13,700, why could the government not come forward with a reduction in the federal excise tax of four cents for the farmer who takes the tractor to work all year for a realized net income of \$13,000? If the four cents was removed from the diesel fuel that a farmer uses driving the tractor in the field, it would mean as much as \$200 or more per month for the farmer.

The family that is trying to live on that small amount of net income would be glad to get an extra \$200 a month to spend on things—I do not know whether the government is concerned about them—like education, food and maybe some health services for their children. There are many good suggestions like that, some that cost money and some that certainly do not.

What is wrong with having a transportation system for moving grain that is not highly regulated and that does not allow efficiencies to be accessed? The western Canadian wheat growers have brought it up time after time.

Mr. Justice Estey, who passed away recently, said time and again that grain transportation should be on a commercial basis and that grain should be moved like any other product in the country.

The western farmers who are affected the most are looked upon as not being smart enough to figure out how to move grain on their own with the rail companies. The government thinks farmers need it to tell them, just like they need the government to tell them how to sell wheat and barley.

There is something funny about the government's budget plans when it cannot see the need to place a priority on agriculture that puts it in number one or two position along with health in order that Canadians can have a decent lifestyle in this country.

The budget does not do for Canadians what it should do and the Canadian Alliance will continue to point that out.

•(1815)

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): It being 6.15 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the amendment now before the House.

[*English*]

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): All those in favour of the amendment will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): In my opinion the nays have it.

The Budget

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): Call in the members.

• (1845)

[*Translation*]

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

*(Division No. 216)***YEAS**

Members

Abbott	Anders
Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)	Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska)
Bailey	Benoit
Borotsik	Breitkreuz
Brisson	Cadman
Casey	Chatters
Duncan	Epp
Forseath	Gallant
Goldring	Grewal
Grey (Edmonton North)	Hanger
Hearn	Herron
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)	Hilstrom
Hinton	Jaffer
Johnston	Keddy (South Shore)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough)	Mark
McNally	Meredith
Merrifield	Pallister
Pankiw	Reid (Lanark—Carleton)
Reynolds	Ritz
Schmidt	Skelton
Solberg	Spencer
Strahl	Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Toews	Wayne
White (Langley—Abbotsford)	Williams
Yelich — 51	

NAYS

Members

Adams	Alcock
Allard	Anderson (Victoria)
Assad	Assadourian
Asselin	Augustine
Bagnell	Baker
Bakopanos	Barnes
Beaumier	Bélaïr
Bélangier	Bellehumeur
Bellemare	Bennett
Bergeron	Bevilacqua
Binet	Blaikie
Blondin-Andrew	Bonin
Boudria	Bradshaw
Brien	Brown
Bryden	Bulte
Byrne	Calder
Cannis	Caplan
Carignan	Carroll
Castonguay	Catterall
Cauchon	Chamberlain
Charbonneau	Chrétien
Coderre	Collenette
Copps	Cotler
Crête	Cullen
Cuzner	Dalphond-Guiral
Davies	Desjarlais
DeVillers	Dhaliwal
Dromisky	Drouin
Dubé	Duceppe
Duplain	Easter
Eggleton	Eyking
Farrar	Finlay
Folco	Fontana
Fournier	Fry
Gagnon (Québec)	Galloway
Girard-Bujold	Godfrey

Godin	Goodale
Guarnieri	Guay
Guimond	Harb
Harvard	Harvey
Hubbard	Ianno
Jackson	Jennings
Jordan	Karygiannis
Keys	Kilger (Stormont—Dundas—Charlottenburgh)
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)	Knutson
Laframboise	Lalonde
Lancôt	Lastewka
Lebel	LeBlanc
Lee	Leung
Lincoln	Longfield
Loubier	MacAulay
Macklin	Mahoney
Malhi	Maloney
Manley	Marcil
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
Matthews	McCallum
McCormick	McDonough
McGuire	McKay (Scarborough East)
McLellan	McTeague
Ménard	Mitchell
Murphy	Myers
Nault	Neville
O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)	O'Reilly
Owen	Pagtakhan
Paradis	Peric
Perron	Peterson
Pettigrew	Phinney
Picard (Drummond)	Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)
Plamondon	Pratt
Proctor	Proulx
Reed (Halton)	Regan
Richardson	Robillard
Robinson	Rock
Roy	Saada
Sauvageau	Savoy
Scherrer	Scott
Serré	Sgro
St-Hilaire	St-Julien
St. Denis	Steckle
Stewart	Stoffer
Szabo	Telegdi
Thibault (West Nova)	Thibeault (Saint-Lambert)
Tirabassi	Tonks
Tremblay (Rimouski-Neigette-et-la Mitis)	Ur
Valeri	Vanclief
Venne	Volpe
Wappel	Wasylycia-Leis
Whelan	Wilfert
Wood — 177	

PAIRED

Members

Bachand (Saint-Jean)	Bertrand
Bigras	Caccia
Desrochers	Dion
Gauthier	Karetak-Lindell
Marceau	Marleau
Minna	Paquette
Patry	Rocheleau
St-Jacques	Tremblay (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay) — 16

The Speaker: I declare the amendment lost.

* * *

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among House leaders in response to the interest among members in today's take note debate. I believe you would find unanimous consent in the House for the following motion. I move:

That the debate this day pursuant to Standing Order 53.1 be extended for no more than 110 minutes and during the whole of the said debate no quorum calls may be received and after the expiration of the initial four hours, the time allotted to each member shall be no more than 10 minutes, inclusive of any questions and comments.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

• (1850)

[*English*]

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 53(1) and to the order made earlier this day, the House shall now resolve itself into committee of the whole for a take note debate on the deployment of Canadian forces personnel in Afghanistan.

* * *

DEPLOYMENT OF CANADIAN FORCES

(The House in committee of the whole on Government Business No. 22—Mr. Milliken in the chair.)

Hon. Art Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.) moved:

That this Committee take note of the deployment of Canadian Forces personnel in Afghanistan.

He said: Mr. Chairman, the government takes its responsibilities for decisions on military deployments with the utmost seriousness, and in carrying out this responsibility, it has repeatedly acted on its commitments to consult with members of this parliament.

[*Translation*]

Since September, we have already had more than 50 hours of debate.

[*English*]

I have appeared before parliamentary committees, as have the chief of defence staff and a number of other officials. I have spoken directly with members of the opposition party on the details of our deployments.

Today's motion is another important step in the process.

[*Translation*]

I would like to start by explaining to the members why Canada is involved in this campaign.

[*English*]

In September, the United States and indeed our continent came under attack. It came under attack by forces who intentionally targeted innocent men, women and children. These criminals showed us that our country and our continent are vulnerable to their acts of terror.

Government Orders

We had no option but to respond, to respond immediately and to respond decisively by taking significant steps to ensure the safety and security of our citizens, by helping restore stability in the international community and suppress the threat of global terrorism, and by standing with the United States and with our other allies in defence of our freedoms and our way of life.

Canada made one of the first and one of the largest contributions to the international coalition against terrorism. To date, we have committed nearly 3,000 members of the Canadian forces to this campaign. It is the fourth largest national contribution in the coalition. For the past several months, our soldiers, sailors and air crews have been active throughout the region, conducting maritime interdiction and surveillance operations, ferrying well over two million pounds of equipment and personnel operating inside Afghanistan and supporting the forces of other coalition members.

Make no mistake, the contribution that is being made by the Canadian forces is critical to the overall coalition effort, a contribution that will be further enhanced when the 3rd battalion of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry deploys into Kandahar in the coming weeks. There it will carry out a range of important tasks. These include exploring sensitive sites such as Taliban and al-Qaeda camps and training facilities, destroying residual Taliban and al-Qaeda forces, military de-mining, maintaining security in the Kandahar area and supporting much needed humanitarian assistance operations at the Kandahar airport.

While these tasks occur in a high risk environment, let me assure members of the House that the decision to deploy these troops was not and is never taken lightly, but we have deployed them in defence of our core Canadian values. As I told members of the parliamentary committees for defence and foreign affairs just two weeks ago, this is not a peacekeeping mission.

[*Translation*]

But it is a mission for which our military is well prepared and ready.

[*English*]

For many years now, the Canadian forces have participated in international operations ranging all the way from traditional peacekeeping through peacemaking to open combat. In fact, our men and women are known for their willingness, confidence and flexibility to serve across the full spectrum of military missions. They are also known for their ability to operate effectively as part of multinational forces, many of which have been led by Canadian forces officers.

Let me reiterate: the men and women who will be deploying as part of this battle group are well prepared and they are well equipped. They will be wearing new combat uniforms for this mission. These uniforms are adequate to the tasks that they will be carrying out, as has been made clear by the chief of defence staff and the commander of the army.

Government Orders

Our troops will move into theatre using a combination of Canadian and U.S. military airlift and perhaps contracted civilian airlift as may be required. Some members have tried to suggest that this arrangement is somehow unique to Canada. That is not the case. In fact, among the 19 NATO allies only two have heavy airlift equipment. Even the United States charters commercial aircraft to help in its airlift needs.

Finally, for this particular mission the Canadian forces will be deployed under the operational control of a United States commander. This means that their day to day operations, the scope of which has been agreed to by the government, will fall under the orders of that person. However, at all times the chief of defence staff retains full command over the battle group and the work that it does. These command arrangements are no different from those involved in any other mission in which we have participated and in many of them we lead and we command, and in many cases United States forces, as is happening right now in the Sinai.

• (1855)

Let me add that the Americans know the depth and range of our experience. They know we have some of the most state of the art equipment available. In fact for this mission they specifically requested our Coyote reconnaissance vehicles, with their high tech surveillance and long range detection systems. They also know that we can operate effectively with them as we have done many times with their and other allied forces. They know that when our members step into theatre they bring with them the training, the commitment and the skills needed to get the job done.

Let me add that getting this job done also means acting in full accordance with Canadian and international laws. That is what we are committed to doing. That is what we will do. Ultimately respect for the rule of law is what this campaign is about.

Canada has earned the excellent reputation it enjoys throughout the world in large part because of our unwavering respect for human rights and international law.

Let me assure members of the House that the Canadian forces will treat detainees in accordance with international law and always fairly and humanely. International law, as reflected in the Geneva conventions, establishes requirements for all detainee states when transferring detainees. The Canadian forces will meet its international legal obligations on transferring detainees.

Canadian officials are consulting closely with the United States to clarify statements made over the weekend regarding the status of detainees being held in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. The United States has welcomed officials from the international committee of the Red Cross to observe its conduct and facilities in both Kandahar and Guantanamo Bay.

Should the need arise I can assure that Canada will make the United States fully aware of any concerns that we may have about treatment of detainees.

Someone once said "When peace has been broken anywhere, the peace of all countries everywhere is in danger". This is one of those times. We are doing what we have to help restore this peace by facing down the threat of terrorism and by helping with the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Afghanistan.

In closing, let me just say how very proud I am and all Canadians are of the tremendous work being carried out by the fine, dedicated men and women of our Canadian forces, work they are carrying out on our behalf. They have shown their commitment to this just cause and in turn their commitment to their country and to their citizens.

[*Translation*]

It is now up to us to show them the support, the respect and the admiration they are entitled to.

[*English*]

The Chairman: At the beginning let me thank all members present who want to participate in this very important debate. The minister has set a fine example by staying within the 10 minutes.

However, seeing the anticipated interest in the subject matter, particularly with the minister in the House, if members could ask their questions within a one minute timeframe and if the minister could respond in an equal amount of time, we could possibly get on a few more members than we might otherwise.

• (1900)

Mr. Leon Benoit (Lakeland, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Chairman, I have two questions for the minister which Canadians have been asking me. First, they have been asking about the lack of preparation in such basic things as the rules of engagement, not having the desert camouflage uniforms ready to go and confusion about how prisoners might be handled.

The very obvious lack of preparation is one concern. Why is that? Why did the minister commit our troops before those questions were all answered?

The second question is about the problems with equipment, starting with the basic uniform. He always refers to the Coyote. Yet the auditor general said in his 2001 report when referring to the Coyote:

A battle group equipped with Coyote type vehicles was regarded as likely to be suitable for peacekeeping but not necessarily for peace restoring operations.

This is a peace restoring operation in Afghanistan. The one piece of equipment to which the minister always refers is not suitable for this type of operation, according to the auditor general.

Why did the minister commit our troops before these questions were answered and without proper equipment? We certainly should be taking part in this operation. There is no doubt.

Hon. Art Eggleton: Mr. Chairman, the hon. member is simply wrong when he says that there is a lack of preparation. They have been well prepared for this mission. They even had extra time because they were preparing for it since we first offered them back in October.

The rules of engagement are being finalized now and will be finalized in the next day or two. It is common practice, and this is something the hon. member obviously does not know about the military, that in the rules of engagement we go over with a reconnaissance party into the area to check things out. When we come back the rules of engagement are finalized because then we have the benefit of knowing what the situation is like there.

Government Orders

The member does not seem to realize that, but the rules of engagement are now being finalized and they will be given to the troops before they go away.

In terms of desert camouflage, this is not a question of government policy or a question of money. It is a question of timing. The new clothing the soldiers are getting, the desert camouflage, is not ready yet, but the commanders say they have no problem with that at all. They think they can operate quite fine with the uniforms they have. In fact they think they will have an advantage at nighttime when many of their operations take place and no problem in the daytime.

You can shake your head but that is what the commanders say. I will tell you something: they know an awful lot more about the military operation than you know.

The Chairman: Order, please. First and foremost I remind participants on both sides of the House that all comments, questions or otherwise will be directed through the Chair, not across the floor to one another.

Mr. Svend Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Chairman, I thank the minister for initiating this very important debate. He talked about the importance of respecting core Canadian values. Many Canadians are deeply concerned, indeed alarmed, at the fact that Canada may be a party to egregious violations not only of international law but of the standards we expect as Canadians in the treatment of prisoners.

I want to ask the minister a very specific question on this subject. In turning over prisoners who may be captured by Canadians participating in the Kandahar operation, will Canada seek concrete assurances on two specific issues: first, that the Geneva conventions will be respected fully including with respect to interrogation and, second, that there will be an assurance no prisoners who are turned over by Canada will be subjected to military tribunals that may order a death penalty on a majority vote? Will we seek those assurances from the Americans before turning over prisoners?

Hon. Art Eggleton: Mr. Speaker, Canada will not be party to any violations. We intend to abide by international law and abide by Canadian law.

To quote a fellow member on this side of the House, we are not about to outsource our moral obligations. With respect to the Geneva conventions, we will be following the Geneva conventions.

The United States has said that it will be in conformity with the spirit of the Geneva conventions. There is some argument. It is required to be totally within the Geneva conventions when it deals with prisoners of war, but there is the contention that a number of these people are not part of a regular military. They are part of a terrorist organization. Therefore they are being referred to as unlawful combatants.

They have every right, though, for a tribunal to determine whether in fact they have status as a prisoner of war or have status as an unlawful combatant. Canada stands by that determination process in accordance with international law. International law does not prohibit the use of the death penalty with respect to military tribunals.

● (1905)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Neigette-et-la Mitis, BQ): Mr. Chairman, the minister is waffling. He is getting into semantics. He talks about the spirit of Geneva and not about the Geneva rules. He says that these people were not combatants but terrorists. They are the ones who will decide.

This morning, we heard on the radio how these prisoners were removed. Their eyes were covered, and their hands and feet were shackled. They have about three square metres in which to move around. These are unacceptable conditions, even for animals, and these are people before they are terrorists. If they are terrorists, Americans must wonder why they have ended up there.

Therefore the minister must truly give us something better than meaningless answers. Real answers are what we need.

[*English*]

Hon. Art Eggleton: Mr. Chairman, the United States has made it very clear that these prisoners will be treated fairly and humanely consistent with the Geneva conventions, consistent with all the needs to make sure the people are getting proper accommodation, food, the opportunity to worship and their health care needs met. All these things will be met in a fair and humane way.

In terms of the shackling and the head covering, I know that is disturbing to a number of people. However we have been told that many of these people have proven to be quite dangerous, quite determined to hurt or kill their captors, and it was found necessary to do it in terms of transport. They are not being held under those conditions, though.

The International Committee of the Red Cross has been there. The British have been there and said they are not being held under the kinds of conditions of being shackled and hooded. That was only done in the case of transporting and only because they were a danger to the people who were transporting them.

Mr. Brian Pallister (Portage—Lisgar, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Chairman, I just want to go back to something the minister spoke about earlier concerning the camouflage uniforms. The minister indicated earlier, I believe in an answer in question period, that military leaders as highly qualified as they may be made the choice to go with the forest green when he knew full well there was no choice to be made. He knew full well that there was no camouflage desert khaki available for those people.

I have to ask the question. If camouflage is not the issue, why is it that our JTF2 troops were given khaki coloured camouflage blankets? If they were given those khaki coloured blankets it must have been to provide them with additional camouflage. I would assume that was the purpose of giving them the blankets.

If it was necessary to give them the blankets, why would it be that having khaki coloured uniforms available, which are clearly superior in that environment and terrain, for the balance of the troops we are sending would not be in retrospect something we would wish we had?

Rather than deny and simply say that the choice was made to have the forest green when in fact no such choice was made—

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The Chairman: Order, please. I must ask the member to put his question.

Mr. Brian Pallister: Mr. Chairman, why is there no choice for us in this issue?

Hon. Art Eggleton: Mr. Chairman, the Canadian forces have made it quite clear that this uniform is quite acceptable to them. The JTF2 may have some of those desert kinds of clothing, blankets or whatever, but it also uses the forest green coloured uniforms.

I asked commanders of the Canadian forces point blank if they were safe to operate in that environment with that clothing, and they have said "Absolutely, yes".

Mr. John Godfrey (Don Valley West, Lib.): Mr. Chairman, the United States maintains that the prisoners in Guantanamo have no legal status. This places them in an unusual position on the planet as being the only human beings on it without human rights and a legal status.

If they were in the United States they would be covered by the U. S. constitution. If they were prisoners of war under the Geneva convention the following section would apply. If there is any doubt, section 5 says, as to their status:

They shall be treated as prisoners of war until that is determined.

Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld said they would never be treated as prisoners of war while Secretary of State Colin Powell said they must be treated as prisoners of war. I would like to know where the minister comes down on this one.

• (1910)

Hon. Art Eggleton: Mr. Chairman, Canadians will treat people in our care as detainees in accordance with the provisions of the third Geneva convention, and that means treating them as prisoners of war until such other determination has been made.

The United States says that it will, consistent with the Geneva conventions, treat people fairly and humanely. The bottom line is treating people fairly and humanely.

There is dispute about their status because after all, as we have been saying, the people who attacked the World Trade Center, who killed innocent men and women, are not military people. They are in fact terrorists, so they have what are called unlawful combatants who they say are not prisoners of war and that is where the dispute is coming into play.

The bottom line is that regardless of which category they are in they have the right to a competent tribunal to determine their status and they have the right to be treated fairly and consistent with the Geneva conventions.

[Translation]

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, BQ): Mr. Chairman, I am a bit surprised to hear the Minister of National Defence reply that Canada could supposedly take the prisoners.

During oral question period today, we were told that it would automatically hand them over to the Americans. How can Canada ensure that the Geneva convention is respected if it turns around and hands the prisoners over to the Americans?

[English]

Hon. Art Eggleton: Mr. Chairman, we will not keep detainees. We do not have detention facilities. None of the other allied forces in Afghanistan do. The only one that has detaining facilities and the capability of taking these people is the United States, but when they are under our jurisdiction or care they will be treated in accordance with the Geneva conventions.

As happened during the second world war and the Korean war with Canadians and Americans, as part of our responsibility in turning them over and transferring them to another force, which is a common thing to do, we have to ensure that those people will in fact be treated in accordance with fair, humane and international law, and we will.

As I indicated in my remarks we will continue to have discussions with the United States to ensure that is adhered to.

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister is quite simple. I thank him for the debate. The reality is that the troops were assembled in November to be a rapid deployment force to Afghanistan. If they were a rapidly deployed force in November ready to go overseas, how would they get there in November?

Hon. Art Eggleton: Mr. Speaker, at the time there was no specific mission. We were looking at the possibility of a peacekeeping type of mission in Kabul. We had put the offer that the troops and their equipment would be available in October. We carried on discussions with the British who were to lead the mission in Kabul, but when we offered them they came back and said no, they would rather have 200 engineers then and maybe the light infantry battalion three months from then. We could not put 200 engineers together at that point in time.

While we were considering the proposition of sending the battalion three months from then, the Americans came and asked us if we would join them in the mission in Kandahar. That is the decision the government made. We believe it is the most effective use of those troops in fighting terrorism.

Mr. Leon Benoit (Lakeland, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to take part in the debate on the Canadian deployment to Afghanistan. A large contingent of soldiers from the PPCLI third battalion, Lord Strathcona and first engineers will soon leave their families and loved ones as well as their country and enter the theatre of war in Afghanistan. I join all members of the House in offering our prayers and sincerest hopes that each and every one will return to Canada safely.

While our men and women are risking their lives in the name of freedom, justice and democracy it is incumbent on members of the House to provide support not only in our words and our hearts but more importantly through our actions. We must ask whether the government is doing enough to defend those who defend us. I must answer no to that question.

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Canadians have been asking the same question. Not only the Canadian public but the government's own defence committee, military analysts from coast to coast, retired servicemen, the auditor general and even some of our allies have been urging Canada to provide a greater commitment to the military. The answer they all keep getting is no, the government is not committed to the military and is failing the men and women of the armed forces.

The military was virtually ignored in the December budget in spite of the fact it was called a defence and security budget. The auditor general had made it clear the week before that we needed a minimum of \$2.2 billion a year to sustain the military at the current level and more to rebuild. The government offered less than 5% of that to the military.

That is unacceptable. It shows the kind of commitment the government has made to the military. It is unacceptable to the men and women who put their lives on the line every day and who will certainly put their lives on the line for our country in the mission to Afghanistan.

I will quote the Prime Minister's response to the criticisms of people who care about the military. He said over the Christmas break:

There's a bunch of guys who are lobbyists, who are representing those who sell armaments, who tell you of course they will give you a better lunch if they have more contracts.

That was the Prime Minister's response when asked to comment on people who genuinely care about the military. It is shameful that our Prime Minister would point the finger of blame at people who really care when their only fault is pointing out that the government's support for our military is not adequate. It also begs a question: With all the cuts to the defence budget over the past years and with the disregard for the Canadian forces in general, why is the government so eager to commit our soldiers unless it is a political exercise? I will talk about that a little.

We continue to get the assurances of the government and the Minister of National Defence that the troops are well equipped for the mission. They say they have the necessary resources to do their job and do it safely. They say everything has been well planned and thought through and that the government has learned from past mistakes. These are the things we are told by the Prime Minister and Minister of National Defence on a regular basis.

The reality is entirely different. I will talk about the reality. First, on the issue of whether we have learned from the past, I will quote from the Somalia inquiry report. It states:

We saw reckless haste and enthusiasm for high-risk, high-profile action undermining due process and rational decision making...Doctrine, proven military processes, guidelines, and even policy were disregarded...The deployment of the CF therefore began with an uncertain mission, unknown tasks, ad hoc command arrangements, an unconsolidated relationship to U.S. command, and unclear rules of engagement.

● (1915)

When I go through the list it sounds exactly like what is happening in Afghanistan. An uncertain mission, unknown tasks, ad hoc arrangements, an unconsolidated relationship with the U.S. command and unclear rules of engagement are all things that are pointed to by defence experts as being of concern right now. What

has the government learned from the Somalia fiasco? It has learned very little. This concerns me urgently.

We are sending our men and women to Afghanistan. The same concerns that were analyzed after Somalia are there again. What has the minister and the government learned from the Somalia fiasco? It has learned very little. It sounds so familiar.

If we look through the problems with this mission and commitment, the problem is not our men and women serving. They are eager to serve. They are well trained. They are as good as any in the world. That is not the problem. The problem is that the government has not given our men and women who serve the country with such commitment the same level of commitment. That is the problem. We can see it by looking at examples.

Serious questions have been asked as to the way the decision was made to serve with U.S. rather than U.K. forces. No concrete answers have been given.

We have no desert pattern camouflage uniforms. The minister keeps giving a different message with every answer on this. First he says we do not need them. Then he says we need them but are in a procurement process and will not have them until summer. He says we will use a blanket. He gives different answers all the time. It is not a well planned mission when the minister of defence has no concrete answers for these questions.

There are no armoured vehicles for the two infantry companies. That is another problem. There is no artillery, no helicopters, and no heavy lift transport or heavy lift helicopters. We again had to hitch a ride with the Americans to take most of our equipment. Two-thirds of our C-130s are more than 35 years old. Many other countries like Australia run the C-130 Hercules. It is a great plane, but most of them are much newer than ours and much more capable. Canada has no ability to lift heavy equipment such as the Coyotes.

The rules of engagement are still being written. The minister has given his explanation of that but it does not wash with many defence experts. There has been no genuine debate in the House of Commons over the Canadian commitment. There has been no parliamentary vote. Even after the chance tonight to air our concerns, long after the decision has been made, there will not be a vote on the issue. I understand the government must make commitments under certain circumstances but there are a lot of questions regarding this.

The minister keeps pointing to the Coyote when trying to make Canadians believe our military is well equipped. I have grave concerns about that. He points to the Coyote as the example of our troops being well equipped. Yet after consulting military experts the auditor general prepared a report that said:

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A battle group equipped with Coyote-type vehicles was regarded as likely to be suitable for peacekeeping but not necessarily for peace-restoring operations...The simulation study concluded that vehicles armoured to the same standard as the Coyote could not withstand the enemy fire they would encounter at the high end of mid-intensity combat without support of heavy forces. It concluded that this type of vehicle could not be considered for a "general purpose" combat force; forces so equipped should be considered light units with limited capabilities and be given only limited tasks.

Yet the minister continually refers to the Coyote as the one piece of equipment Canada should be proud of. He says it is the proper equipment for the mission. The auditor general and defence experts say differently.

The minister is sending our troops into this situation with many questions left unanswered. That is of concern to me. It is of concern to my party. It is of concern to Canadians. I hope tonight at least we will get some of the answers from the minister. I am looking forward to hearing them.

• (1920)

Hon. Art Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, most of what was just said I must strongly disagree with. In terms of the preparation of our troops, a lot of things have happened since 1993. A lot of changes have been made since the Somalia mission.

The chief of defence staff, the chief of the army, and the commander of the Princess Patricia battalion all say their troops are ready to participate in the mission. They have drafted and are finalizing the rules of engagement. They say it is a precise mission with certain objectives which I have enunciated tonight.

I want the hon. member to stand and say if he thinks the chief of defence staff, the chief of the army, and the commander of the battalion are wrong. Are they right or are they wrong, yes or no?

The Chairman: I cannot pass up the opportunity. It is kind of a role reversal but that is what these debates are for.

Mr. Leon Benoit: Mr. Chairman, I like it and soon it will be very common this way.

However, this is an interesting question that the minister asks because today the chief of the defence staff stated in the media, in spite of the fact that he has to say what he is told and obviously he cannot disagree with the minister, that this mission could not be sustained if it were to go longer than six months.

If it goes longer than six months we will have to pull our troops out of Bosnia. We will have to pull them out of the Balkans because we could sustain this commitment. We cannot sustain all of the commitments that have been made by the government because our military does not have enough people and the proper equipment.

The chief of the defence staff and the other top—

An hon. member: Answer the question, Leon.

• (1925)

The Chairman: Order please. We are getting into a very important debate. I know everyone is well rested after the break, full of energy and enthusiasm, but this debate will be done in a traditional, orderly and parliamentary fashion.

Mr. Leon Benoit: Mr. Chairman, the minister and his colleagues over there are very touchy about this issue and the reason is that they

know it is true. They committed our troops before they were ready and that is unacceptable.

Mr. David Pratt (Nepean—Carleton, Lib.): Mr. Chairman, frankly I have never heard so much second-guessing of the senior command of the Canadian military in one speech in all of my life. The hon. member for Lakeland seemed to suggest that the Canadian government was getting involved in this deployment for purely political reasons.

Does the hon. member feel that the people from the Conference of Defence Associations who supported this deployment, as well as people such as retired General Lewis MacKenzie, who also supported this deployment, are completely wrong in their assessment of the Canadian government's intentions?

Mr. Leon Benoit: Mr. Chairman, I support the fact that Canada should be involved in commitments in Afghanistan. It should be involved. However that means the government must have enough people in the forces and must have them properly equipped.

Under today's circumstances, the chief of the defence staff, in spite of his touchy political situation, has said we are overstretched. The top brass have said we are overstretched. Before any of these commitments were made to Afghanistan, we had a member of the top brass of the military say we cannot possibly meet a further deployment and sustain it.

The government made commitments on behalf of our military and of course it will say yes. The chief of the defence staff and the top brass in our military are good people. Those at the very top are put in a political situation and that is unfortunate. They are not free to tell us the whole truth in committee and that is unfortunate. However, the top brass have said in every way they can that we do not have enough people and they are not properly equipped.

I am tired of the government turning that around and making it sound like we do not think our soldiers are the best in the world because they are as good as any in the world.

Mr. David Pratt: Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask the member a question with respect to the uniform issue. It is my understanding that the British, French and Germans are wearing a camouflage pattern that is very similar to the pattern being worn by the Canadians. Do somehow or other the British, French and Germans have it all wrong in terms of their assessment of the situation? As well, of all the NATO countries, only two have significant strategic lift capability, does that make the French and Germans second rate militaries?

Mr. Leon Benoit: Mr. Chairman, in terms of the heavy lift aircraft within NATO, it is true that the United States and the United Kingdom are the only ones with the C-17s, but the European countries as a group are in the process of procuring heavy lift aircraft and they are well along in that process. Canada has not even started.

The member of the Liberal Party and chairman of the defence committee is saying that the British and others have the right uniforms but the colours are different than the Canadian uniforms. They are not the same. We have the minister of defence saying they should have the desert camouflage but the procurement process will not allow us to have it until summer. In 1992 Canadian soldiers tested three different models of desert camouflage uniforms in Somalia. They chose one and 10 years later we still do not have it. It is disgusting.

• (1930)

Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Chairman, I was never in the military but I was in the RCMP. I know that to become the commissioner of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police one has to have certain political connections which are helpful to get there. The chiefs of staff are no different. I am saying this on behalf of every enlisted NCO in the armed forces who knows very well that the chiefs of staff are not at liberty to speak their mind about the state of our military, where it should be and where they would like to have it. Do our NCOs and enlisted men really believe that we are an army that is fully equipped and fully supplied to do our job?

Mr. Leon Benoit: Mr. Chairman, of course they are not properly equipped. There are not enough people and they do not have the proper equipment. That is the answer to that question.

In terms of the politicizing of the position, I understand the need for the chief of defence staff and the head of the army, navy and air force. I understand the political connection there. That is the way it has to be. However, when these people come to committee, they should tell the truth and they should be allowed to say what they want to say. They do not lie, but in fact they are not allowed to tell the whole truth and to expand on the answers to our questions. They are good people; they are in an impossible situation. Everyone knows that.

[Translation]

Ms. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Chairman, I must say at the outset that the Bloc agrees with the principle of sending troops to Afghanistan. We think it is important to work with Afghanistan for the purpose of maintaining security and for other activities such as the distribution of food.

However, my first remark will be to say that we deeply regret that the House was not asked to vote on such an important issue, especially since the minister just confirmed that it was indeed a high risk mission. It is not a peacekeeping mission. It is a mission to restore peace. This mission is not conducted under the aegis of the UN. Canadian soldiers will be taking part in the American military intervention.

It seems extremely important to us, for the troops that we are sending over there, that they have the support of parliament, that all parliamentarians, both on the government side and on the opposition side, have the opportunity to vote on this issue.

Do you think there would be more of us here tonight if we were sure that our questions would be answered or that a vote would change something? It would be reassuring for you. It would be reassuring for these men and women that we are sending over there

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on a mission in which we believe and for the families who will stay here and worry.

It is even less acceptable considering the fact—as my colleague opposite, whom I respect for other reasons, will recall—that the Liberals themselves requested the opportunity to vote on two occasions in 1990 when Canadian troops were sent to Iraq. The government of the day gave them that opportunity. In the current situation, should we not have had the opportunity to vote?

In view of the time constraints, I would be remiss if I did not mention that this show is run exclusively by the executive, with consultations and hours of discussions—and I was going to say meaningless discussions—that are totally unsatisfactory with regard to obtaining answers and making changes.

The main question we raised deals with Canada's responsibility should our soldiers take prisoners. It was confirmed, and it was also confirmed in committee, that they will not have access to detention facilities. What will our soldiers do? They will have to hand these prisoners over to the American forces, knowing that they have no means of ensuring compliance with the Geneva convention or with Canadian laws.

In the United States, from what we know, military tribunals do not even respect the American constitution. That is undoubtedly the reason why they are on Cuban and not American soil. These military tribunals cannot be monitored by the Canadian government. But we know that it is essential, if the Geneva convention is to be respected, that prisoners be treated in a certain manner until they have access to a tribunal.

• (1935)

This tribunal itself must give assurances of independence and of prisoners' access to a defence. And, until their fate is decided, prisoners may not be asked for more than their name and the group to which they belong. They may not be asked for more than that.

Right now, American television stations are carrying broadcasts about whether or not torture should be permitted. That is one thing, but the death penalty is also pending.

The Canadian government has refused to extradite individuals who might be sentenced to death. I have reread the remarks of the new Minister of Foreign Affairs, whose intelligence, experience and competence we respect, but what does he say? He assures us that the government will follow this issue very closely.

[English]

The government will be following very closely how this evolves.

[Translation]

There is no assurance nor is there any means. The prisoners will have been handed over by soldiers who, at the very least, should be able to count on a parliament which does not just hold a hasty late night debate such as this, but which gives this operation its full attention. This is an important and high risk operation.

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Mr. Wright, who appeared before the committee, said that he did not know exactly how Canada could ensure that the Geneva convention and Canadian laws could be observed. Everyone says that they will keep an eye on this, but we in the House see that the government has only this assurance to give us. I repeat: the soldiers over there will be in the situation of handing over prisoners when, according to Canadian laws and undertakings, they should know how these prisoners are to be treated.

It disturbs us that parliament cannot play a full role in this, that is, by being able to vote on the issue.

We have emphasized here in the House on a number of occasions the need for an international criminal tribunal, which could have been created, and can be created, by the UN security council, in order to ensure that the prisoners are judged with complete fairness and that justice is not only done, but also appears to be done. It must not be lost sight of that we are going to be closely involved, because of what we are doing at present, so that in all of this wide world—not all of it pro-western—justice will appear to have been done, as well as be done.

It must be also be said that this Canadian contribution to restoring security to Afghanistan, to providing food aid etc, is just part of what needs doing. Canada is already committed to providing \$100 million in addition to its promised \$16 million. It must be realized, however, compared to the overall need—Canada is not alone in this—it is very little.

The country is totally bled dry. It must be reconstructed, which requires both time and aid. This needs pointing out, because we will have to be putting some money into this, but that will not be all. Restoring security within a given time limit is one thing, but making a positive contribution to a country's peace and development, a place where human rights are respected, is something else.

For all these reasons, what would have been needed, and it is not too late to do it, is for parliament to address all aspects of this issue and vote on it.

• (1940)

[*English*]

Hon. Art Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Chairman, I respect the very strongly held opinions and feelings of the hon. member. She did say though that she felt this was not under the United Nations. Is she not aware that article 51 of the United Nations does provide for self-defence for the United States? In view of article 5 of NATO we have entered into a collective self-defence. This has been reiterated by security council resolutions 1368, 1373 and 1378, three resolutions since September 11.

Is she not also aware that the International Committee of the Red Cross monitors the fair and humane treatment of prisoners?

Finally, with respect to this international tribunal, is she not aware that Canada has supported an international criminal tribunal? However, there are not sufficient countries in the United Nations to be able to establish one at this point in time and therefore, under international law, would require moving toward the military commissions that are established in accordance with the law of armed conflict in the Geneva conventions.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: Mr. Chairman, I am happy to answer the minister's questions. First, I would like to point out how frustrating this is having a debate when everything has already been decided. This was the feeling that our caucus expressed quite strongly. We are here to participate in the debate out of respect just the same, because we believe in the importance of this mission, but we do believe that the soldiers deserve better.

In response to his first question, my answer is of course I am aware. However, I am also aware that there is a force which was created directly by one of those security council resolutions, led by Great Britain and on which Canada wanted to serve, given our tradition and the commitments made here by the Minister of Foreign Affairs at the time, essentially asking the UN to intervene, and not simply through a security council confirmation that what the U.S. was doing was acceptable under international law.

We must not forget Canada's tradition—I will remind the House—the role that Lester B. Pearson played in creating the peacekeepers, when asked to participate in a bilateral operation that was not illegal. So, a Canadian tradition has been put aside. That in no way takes away from the efforts, professionalism and virtues of our troops. However, the decisions of the executive—let's call a spade a spade—could very well have gone another way, precisely to protect that autonomy and independence.

The second question was on the subject of the Red Cross. The Red Cross may well see things, but will it report publicly? And after the fact, what will happen? The U. S. will maintain complete autonomy.

And finally, the third question also surprised me quite a bit, because the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and for Rwanda was set up by the security council, and it could have been the same thing. Many organizations, incidentally, proposed creating an international criminal tribunal for international terrorists.

• (1945)

Mr. Robert Lanctôt (Châteauguay, BQ): Mr. Chairman, I have a question for my colleague. This is not an emergency situation. This is only a take note debate and no vote will be taken.

This could have been the subject of a real debate, particularly in light of the answers we have received today. “We will arrest some people. We will make prisoners and we will let the Americans do what they want with those prisoners”.

We talked earlier about a common currency and about the fact that a debate should be held on that matter. We heard things like “We will not do it because it would harm Canada's sovereignty”. However there is nothing worse than taking prisoners away from a territory, Afghans, and turning them over to the Americans. Is that normal? Is it not in fact a loss of sovereignty to do things like that?

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Further to a debate like the one we are having here tonight, a pointless debate, a debate that only serves to make this government look good when we all know that it has already made its decisions, our soldiers are leaving before we had time to hold a real debate and I am really wondering what will happen to them when they turn prisoners over to another country that will not necessarily respect the same laws as Canada. I am therefore asking my colleague—

The Deputy Chairman: The hon. member for Mercier.

Ms. Francine Lalonde: This is a broad issue. I would say that we are here this evening out of respect for these men and women who are going to Afghanistan and who put their trust in us. Again, these men and women deserve better. They are going to face a difficult and high risk situation where, for the first time, this trademark that Canadians are so proud of abroad is not guaranteed. This is what must be mentioned.

In committee, I noticed that some government members were very uncomfortable with the death penalty that may be imposed by military tribunals. They remain extremely uncomfortable with that possibility.

It is true that we are in a situation where everything is very confusing. The intention is undoubtedly a good one, but the implementation of the laws, principles and values of this country is not guaranteed. Unfortunately, the government cannot give us assurances in that regard, on the contrary.

• (1950)

Mr. Svend Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Chairman, first I want to congratulate the hon. member for Mercier for her excellent speech and tell her, on behalf of my colleagues, that we fully agree with the principle of a vote and with her strong criticism of the Liberal government's position.

I would like to ask her a question about the death penalty. I have asked the Minister of National Defence to assure the House that if we deliver prisoners to the Americans, we will have absolute assurance that they will not be tried before a tribunal where a vote, not necessarily a unanimous vote but a majority vote, could result in the imposition of the death penalty.

Respect for life and strong opposition to the death penalty are among the fundamental values shared by Canadians and Quebecers. Does the hon. member agree that Canada should not hand over a prisoner to the Americans if they are not prepared to assure us that they will not impose the death penalty?

Ms. Francine Lalonde: Mr. Chairman, I think that is an interesting question. In fact, the response of the new minister, who seemed to lend a sympathetic ear to the question, gives us no guarantee of this. That is what I was trying to say, that Canadian soldiers ought not to be in a position to hand prisoners over to the Americans and their courts, where they are liable to the death penalty. They are in a situation where they have no choice but to hand them over. It is therefore regrettable that we are in a situation where we cannot vote and consequently cannot require a clear response and perhaps some guarantees and changes so as to avoid this situation.

[*English*]

Mr. John O'Reilly (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Chairman, I have the greatest respect for the member for Mercier. She always tends to give a very broad and well thought out statement.

The member mentioned the Blue Berets but I believe there are no Blue Berets going on this mission. This is not peacekeeping, this is peacemaking. I wonder if she realizes that there is quite a difference. We are in fact sending troops into a combat situation. We are not sending them on a peacekeeping mission. I would hope that she would think of the condition of some of the prisoners when they were captured. She should think of the images of Johnny—

The Deputy Chairman: The hon. member for Mercier.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: Mr. Chairman, there must have been a problem with the interpretation, because it is obvious that I know very well that this is not a peacekeeping operation, and said so. That is very clear.

What I also said is that it is a Canadian tradition to want to be part of the UN efforts, so proudly promoted by Lester B. Pearson—

The Deputy Chairman: I am sorry to interrupt, but the hon. member's time is up.

The hon. member for Halifax.

[*English*]

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Chairman, let me say right off the top that the New Democratic Party is solidly on the public record as supporting Canada's honourable international role as peacekeepers and peacemakers.

Further, the defence minister knows that when he announced on November 15 the deployment of troops to Afghanistan on a humanitarian and peacekeeping mission, I, on behalf of the New Democratic Party, stated publicly and issued a written statement reinforcing that the NDP would support such deployment of troops under three conditions: that it would indeed be peacekeeping and humanitarianism as announced by the minister but that the terms of engagement would be absolutely clear; that such deployment take place under United Nations auspices; and that no such deployment would take place until there had been a debate and a vote in the House of Commons.

Regrettably we have not seen those conditions met. In fact the deployment of the 750 troops to Afghanistan, which is in the process of taking place, is in absolute defiance of all three of those conditions as stipulated.

I think a lot of Canadians agree with us that a vote on such troop deployment is both a right and a responsibility of elected parliamentarians in a democratic system. Unfortunately we have once again been denied that right. The government prefers to rule Canadians by fiat.

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Many serious questions need frank debate and full answers and we find ourselves tonight, regrettably, debating these issues very much in an after the fact fashion. There are questions that the families of soldiers, sailors and air personnel want answered, not as the troop deployment is taking place but before their loved ones head off into combat roles for the first time in half a century. There are questions about Canadian sovereignty as we assign our soldiers to fight under the flag and the unilateral command of the United States, not under the auspices of the United Nations.

Ever since the terrorist attacks of September 11, which horrified people around the world, serious questions of international law have surrounded the bombings of Afghanistan and the interpretation of our article 51. The defence minister again tonight said that article 51 permits what has taken place in terms of the bombing of Afghanistan, but there are serious questions of interpretation of article 51 and whether in fact self-defence includes the planned, premeditated military aggression that has taken place there.

Most recently, even at the highest levels in the United States, questions have been raised about the U.S. conduct in handling prisoners of war, about which our colleague from Mercier has herself raised numerous questions here tonight in this debate, questions about the handling of prisoners of war who are captured in Afghanistan.

There are alarming questions as well about our defence readiness and the adequacy of our equipment. The soldiers virtually had to hitchhike their way to get to the battlefield. In the case of our Sea Kings, personnel live in perpetual fear that those antiquated helicopter will just give up the ghost after their many years of faithful service.

There are questions about soldiers wearing uniforms that are suited more for the forests of the north than where they are being assigned, which is to fight in a desert context.

Let me turn briefly to the rules of engagement.

● (1955)

Surely there is nothing more fundamental to responsible deployment of troops than ensuring that the terms of engagement are clear and unambiguous. This is not a theoretical question. This is not some kind of abstract forward looking concern.

The main Canadian force has yet to be deployed but we know that our Joint Task Force 2 commandos have been operating inside Afghanistan in an offensive role for more than two months. Although such commando operations are shrouded in secrecy, it has to raise questions in people's minds about what the terms of engagement have been there.

What have our troops, those who are already there and those who are on their way, been told about how they are to deal with prisoners captured on the battlefield? The more we hear the debate around this question the clearer it becomes that our Canadian troops should not be deployed into that dangerous, ambiguous situation without terms of engagement being pinned down.

Have the troops been given orders to kill? Have they been told to capture prisoners but to turn them immediately over to the Americans? What is our government saying to Canadians and

responsible citizens in this world about the spectre of turning over captured soldiers to a country that has not indicated its willingness to fully respect the Geneva Convention and is prepared to subject those prisoners to military tribunals which could result in their facing the death penalty? We have yet to hear an answer to that question.

We know what can happen in situations where the terms of engagement are not clear. Our American neighbours experienced this firsthand in Somalia, leading to both military and civilian deaths which might have been avoided if the operation had been clearer.

While the risk to our troops is our primary concern, we must also look at the risk that such a poorly conceived operation could have on our international reputation, on the long term safety of all Canadian citizens and on Canadian military personnel who find themselves captured in some other combat situation.

There is literally an international debate raging about the meaning and the sanctity of the Geneva Convention on the treatment of prisoners of war. Surely it should command attention and cause the gravest of concern to our government that America's leading soldier, the secretary of state, Colin Powell, has been reported in the *Washington Times* as having tried to urge the American president that combatants captured in the field in Afghanistan be accorded the fundamental human rights that civilized nations have agreed upon under the Geneva Convention. We can be sure that Colin Powell would not take on his president lightly. He is not doing it just because he is a human rights advocate. He is doing it because as a soldier he knows what respecting the rights of prisoners of war means and what it can mean in the future.

Any military action in Afghanistan or anywhere else in the world should be solidly rooted in Canadian values. Yet it is ironic that we have to ask this government to look to the inspiration and the message provided by Barbara Lee, the U.S. congresswoman who stood alone in the United States against the allocation of resources to begin the bombing, and said, in our fight against terrorism "let us not become the evil that we deplore".

This is very good advice and advice that all thinking Canadians believe our government should take if we are to maintain a proud international reputation in this troubled world.

● (2000)

Mr. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Chairman, I listened to the hon. leader of the fourth party with great interest. She said that there had to be the three conditions, as set out by her party, or the party would not support this. That is interesting. The NDP want a vote. I am just wondering if we lost in November 2000. Is there any question that the Liberal members would have supported this?

The member said that combat had not taken place over half a century. I am just wondering if she missed Kosovo, the gulf war and Somalia? Does the hon. leader of the fourth party want to set her three conditions for the 79% of Canadians who are in favour of this particular—

An hon. member: What about your boss? He wanted a vote in 1990.

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Mr. Jim Karygiannis: My colleague across the way wants to know where I was in 1990. My question is very simple. Is the leader of the NDP in tune with the times of what Canadians want or is she leading a voice in the wilderness?

● (2005)

Ms. Alexa McDonough: Mr. Chairman, let me try to respond to that rambling intervention. I am not sure if there were questions there or not, but let me try.

Perhaps this comes as news to the member who just spoke, but my colleague from Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore is absolutely right when he reminds all members of the House that the current Prime Minister, when he was leader of the Liberal opposition during the gulf war stated that absolutely under no conditions would Canada sign on in the gulf war unless: first, it was under UN auspices; second, that every other peaceful avenue had been fully exhausted before there was any decision to enter into that combat theatre; and, third, that there be both a debate and a vote in the House of Commons before any deployment of Canadian troops.

If those conditions seem to be totally unreasonable, maybe this Liberal member should talk to the current Prime Minister about why he set out very similar conditions when he was on this side of the House.

Second, if I understood the member correctly, his objection to our setting out such conditions in opposition, which is what his leader did in 1990, was that the Liberals won the last election so why would they have to account to the New Democratic Party or anyone else for what they did. I would say the logical extension of that thinking is to say that we will just not bother having a parliament. We will do what we want for four or five years and then we will go back to Canadians. The New Democratic Party does not call that democracy.

Mr. Leon Benoit (Lakeland, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Chairman, it is interesting to hear the change in the position of the New Democratic Party when it comes to support for the military. Certainly over the years it was a party that I do not think ever supported putting more money into the military or ever showed great support for it. In fact, through most of its history it has done just the opposite.

However with the current critic things have changed. I give him a lot of credit for that. He has moved his party some distance in supporting the military and has made great contributions at committee. The leader of the New Democratic Party today in her intervention expressed support for the military and concern for the men and women serving in it. I believe that is sincere. However, I would suggest that is a lot like the Liberals. They talk about support, and probably really do feel support in their hearts for the men and women serving in the military, but they do not go beyond that.

In the case of the government, it should go beyond that by committing the resources necessary. The auditor general says that just to maintain the military at its current rundown level will cost more than \$2.2 billion a year and more if we want to start rebuilding and getting enough people and proper equipment.

I would like to ask the hon. leader of the NDP whether her party would go beyond the words and the heartfelt support for the men and women, which is the same approach the government takes then makes no commitment beyond that. Will her party publicly promote

the concept of committing more than \$2.2 billion per year of new spending on the military—

● (2010)

Deputy Chairman: The hon. member for Halifax.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: Mr. Chairman, first, I think every member of the House recognizes that it is an excruciatingly difficult thing to decide on what the balance is in the budgetary commitments and what can be made and must be made to deal with the chronic underfunding to support the current military. There will be debates about what the amounts should be and how we should balance that off against other very important claims on the public dollar and important needs of Canadians.

Members of the New Democratic Party do not have to take a back seat or a slap of the hand from this member or any other members for their stand in support of the military.

The member may remember that Tommy Douglas, when he was leader of this party in the province of Saskatchewan, went overseas to meet with the troops to indicate his support. When he was elected premier of the province of Saskatchewan in 1944, one of the heaviest sources of support came from the military men and women who looked ahead to the kind of Canada and the kind of world they wanted to build. They looked to the leadership that the first social democratic premier in a province would give and did give in the subsequent years. He ultimately became the national leader of our party and we were always proud of that.

It has always surprised me that people for some bizarre reason, at least it seems bizarre to me, feel compelled to taunt me, as the member for the riding of Halifax, as not understanding the military and not being responsive to the needs of the military. I am very proud of the fact that in my 21 years of elected office I have always represented a riding in which there was a military base. I did so for 14 years and I have since coming to the House of Commons in the last six years.

The funny thing is those complaints always come from partisans in the House of Commons or out in the communities where they do not want to face the fact that I have enjoyed the support of military men and women. I have been proud to enjoy that support through my 21 years in public office and will continue to do so as long as I am privileged to represent them.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, BQ): Mr. Chairman, I want to congratulate the leader of the New Democratic Party on her speech. I would like her to comment on the motion that is before us tonight. As she was reminding us a few moments ago, her party promotes democratic values.

The motion before us tonight reads as follows:

That this House take note of the deployment of Canadian forces personnel in Afghanistan.

We are having this debate, but the motion is asking us to “take note”. I would like to give her the opportunity to tell us how she feels about a debate on a motion that is simply asking us to “take note”.

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I am taking her by surprise, and I certainly do not want to ask her to give me the number of the resolution or the section of her party's statutes dealing with this issue, but I once attended the New Democratic Party's convention as an observer—

The Deputy Chairman: The hon. member for Halifax.

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Chairman, I totally agree with the member. It is not democracy when we cannot take part in the decision making process. Democracy means that we must have the opportunity to debate an issue as serious as this one. And following such debate, our questions concerning our soldiers and their families having been answered, we should have the opportunity to vote. No debate was held before troops were deployed, and we did not have the opportunity to vote on that. I agree with the member.

● (2015)

[*English*]

Mrs. Elsie Wayne (Saint John, PC/DR): Mr. Chairman, it is a great honour and privilege for me to rise tonight to discuss the issue of our military.

The most difficult decision that any parliament can make is the decision to send our military forces, the most courageous of all our citizens, into harm's way. It is a decision that cannot be made lightly, but it is also a decision that must be made without hesitation.

When we commit our men and women in uniform, we must do so with a clear purpose and a clear mission. These brave men and women, those who will fight on the front lines of this campaign against terrorism, are fulfilling the ultimate duty to their country. We in return owe an awesome duty to them and I fear that we are not living up to our end of the bargain.

Let us face the fact that the Canadian armed forces are in a terrible state. On the one hand, they are overflowing with patriotic commitment and courage. Yet on the other, they are plagued by shortages of resources and equipment. The people in uniform could never let us down, but our politics and the process of government have failed them.

We continue to dispatch the units that will make up our Canadian contingent in Afghanistan and we deprive them of every imaginable advantage they should expect as the military force of an industrialized western country. Already the deployment of our troops has been delayed by the shortage of airlift capacity, a problem that was diagnosed many years ago. Already our forces have been mocked for having inappropriate combat fatigues and camouflage, the department having been forced to sell what they now need two years ago.

I was appalled when I found out that people in Nova Scotia were buying back the uniforms from second hand stores. I understand they had to raise \$100 for each one so that they could give these uniforms back to the military. I cannot believe that we in Canada would do such a thing to our men and women in the armed forces.

Already we wait for a final word on the Canadian rules of engagement, their final version still being drafted. The minister has admitted this. The rules of engagement are supposed to be done months before any of our military personnel go into any kind of combat or into a situation like this. They are to know exactly what they will be doing.

What happened in Somalia? Some had one card of rules of engagement and another group had another card of rules of engagement. After Somalia, a committee established a commission to review this. The commission came back and said the biggest problem was the rules of engagement. We are sending military personnel overseas without the rules of engagement laid out for them.

These problems are not unusual. In fact, we have almost come to expect that. When we read about our military in the daily newspaper, the story will mention at least one major problem that is well known to all of us.

The truth is very different. The problems that I have outlined, the early problems known to the public, are far more serious than they might appear at first glance. If we do not have the proper airlift capacity sufficient to deliver our forces and equipment to the theatre of operation, how will they get there?

One of the heaviest sources of support I can imagine that we would rely on to bail us out once again, as I am certain all hon. members can imagine, would be either our American or Great Britain benefactors. However what if a situation should arise in Afghanistan that would require us to remove our troops in an emergency? How would we evacuate our men and women in uniform? Should we not expect that the Americans or the British in such a situation would use their equipment to withdraw their troops first? Could we expect that their generosity would extend to risking the lives of their troops to save ours? No, we know that would not be the situation.

● (2020)

Perhaps the more general question, the more fundamental question, is why a country like ours, a country like Canada, known for sending its armed forces to each and every corner of the globe, would not have the airlift capacity needed to manage our own troop deployments. It seems to me that it is a cruel and unusual twist of irony that we would seek to build and train the best fighting force on the globe yet not take the time and effort necessary to ensure that we can always move them to where they need to be.

I mentioned a moment ago that our forces are being subjected to the humiliation of being wrapped in beige blankets by our allies because we do not have the right kind of camouflage for the Afghani environment. They sent the blankets over to our JTF2 men and women. They sent them blankets the colour of the desert to wrap their camouflage uniforms in. First we were told last week that the government had put out a contract and the new combat uniforms would be available next June. Then we got another call within a few hours telling us "I'm sorry, that's not accurate. We haven't got a contract for uniforms at all".

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I respect and understand that the purpose of camouflage is to create an optical illusion that prevents hostile forces from making a full and proper visual identification of our troops. I understand that the varying and seemingly random patterns of different colours can have that effect. Whether the base colour is green or beige, it does not change the fact that the purpose of camouflage is to allow soldiers to blend into their surroundings. When we have a contingent of Canadian soldiers wearing a pattern of camouflage created for and used in forest regions of Canada and northern Europe working with Americans outfitted in beige desert fatigues, who do we think will most likely stand out against a backdrop of the sandy countryside of Afghanistan? Which uniforms do we think would cause the most striking contrast to the in theatre environment and surroundings?

I want to be clear that I am not trying to strike fear into the hearts of the families and loved ones of our soldiers, nor do I want to sound like an alarmist, but let me ask those assembled here tonight, why on earth did the Department of National Defence think it was wise to sell the Canadian desert combat clothing that we used as recently as the gulf war? To answer my own question, I offer two simple options. Either our forces were under the impression that it was unlikely or even impossible that we would again fight a war in a desert or they found themselves so starved for resources that they had no choice but to start selling off their equipment.

Personally I have a hard time thinking that our military forces were motivated by a belief that we would never again commit our troops to an arid desert region, but there are literally tons of evidence stemming from the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs right through to reports of two successive auditor generals that show that our military is in desperate need of financial help. The auditor general stated:

The Department has frequently said that the Canadian Forces have never been more capable. But until steps are taken to manage equipment readiness more adequately, these claims should be taken with a grain of salt.

Those were the words of the auditor general, and in 1998 the then auditor general made serious recommendations to the government to increase both operational and capital funding to allow DND to meet the policy of the 1994 white paper and avoid rust-out of equipment. That never happened either.

What does that say about the state of our armed forces? What does that say about this government's commitment to our national defence? I think that when the decision comes back to haunt us, as this one has, it is a clear warning that we need an immediate and purposeful investment in our military. To that end, a great opportunity was missed when the Minister of Finance brought down his most recent budget last December.

Finally and perhaps most shockingly, I will just once again mention the rules of engagement. Those rules of engagement have to be in place. Money has to be put into the military. The men and women in uniform cannot come to Parliament Hill with placards. We can go out there every day and find different interest groups with placards fighting for what they believe is right, but the military cannot do it. Only we can do it for them. That is why I am here tonight, and I will continue to speak for them.

● (2025)

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, PC/DR): Mr. Chairman, the hon. member mentioned rules of engagement. It is my understanding that Canadian soldiers will be serving under American soldiers. The American soldiers are already there in the theatre of combat; they must have rules of engagement.

As the minister said earlier, the government has not determined the rules of engagement so it sounds as though our Canadian soldiers will have rules of engagement different from those of the American soldiers with whom they will be fighting side by side.

It brings to light certain differences in Canadian and American approaches. For instance, we have legislation and commitments against landmines. We have policies against submitting anyone to the death penalty in Canada. We have policies against turning prisoners of any kind over to any agency or country that might possibly subject those prisoners to the death penalty.

I wonder whether the member could tell the House if she sees problems with this conflict between the Americans and the Canadians in rules of engagement, considering that the Americans are already in the theatre of combat.

Mrs. Elsie Wayne: Mr. Chairman, I thank my hon. colleague for his question. Yes, I see many problems for our military because of the rules of engagement that are not laid out.

I have to say, as my hon. colleague has stated, that the rules of engagement for the Americans are laid out, but what happens in a situation where the Americans open fire and our forces are told in their rules of engagement that they are not to be in that kind of combat? What happens? Because they are with them, and it is not impossible that an American officer with command authority over our forces in theatre could give an order that would have to be disobeyed by our troops because it would conflict with our Canadian made brand of ROEs.

What about landmines? We have adopted a policy. We are opposed to landmines. The Americans are for landmines. They are putting out more landmines right now in Afghanistan.

An hon. member: Who is?

Mrs. Elsie Wayne: The Americans are, around where they land their planes and where their troops are sleeping and eating. They have put them there.

I think it is only fair that we insist they are given a single final draft, not various different versions. We have to make sure that their rules of engagement are spelled out for them so they know what they can or cannot do. We do not want to see any of them hurt. We want them all home again, safe.

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, PC/DR): Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank the member for Saint John. We come from almost opposite ends of the country but I know that we share a tremendous concern for the fine members of our military and for their families as well.

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We should focus just a few minutes of this take note debate tonight on just how real all these people are. I represent many military families out of Edmonton and of course out of the big super base at Edmonton. They are just a tremendous bunch of people who are committed to this cause. I saw one young fellow on TV the other night. He said "I came off my hunting trip in November because I was being called up". He came back from his hunting trip and said he has been waiting to go ever since then. These people are committed to this cause and we just want to say thank you to them.

Yet as we look at the fact that these are real people, not just numbers and uniforms, albeit the wrong uniforms for the theatre they are going to, I find it interesting that one of the Strathconas plans to go for a walk with his wife of 23 years and hopes to look at new camping gear this week, such as solar panels for his 27-foot trailer. These are real people and they want to go and do what they can do, serve their country and then come back to their families and enjoy them. He said that hopefully they could go to the RV show Thursday night at the Agricom, adding that the couple are avid campers.

This is real life. These are the real people we are saluting tonight and to whom we are saying thank you. They are looking forward to going overseas. Many of them have left already. Many more are going in the next couple of weeks. Yet these are people who love, who have families and who are dedicated to them. As the member just said, hopefully all of them will be coming home after they have been in that theatre.

I would like to ask the member what she thinks about the politicization of the military, the strategic moving of bases for whatever reason, to make government or anyone else look good, and why it is that we cannot have rules of engagement, why it is that we cannot have a forward looking plan, why it is that the white paper of 1994 seems so obsolete right now. I wonder if she could comment on that.

● (2030)

Mrs. Elsie Wayne: Mr. Chairman, I thank my hon. colleague for that question. I have to say that the military has become very politicized and it should never be. Politics have to be taken out of the military.

With the events of September 11, significant investment in our national defence is needed more than ever before. We now see it. I think all 301 colleagues in the House now see it. We just must have the courage to do it.

Reductions in expenditures have negatively impacted over all operations. This has been confirmed by the auditor general, by the Canadian Defence Association and by all military experts, Not those of us in the House but all military experts have said that we have to look after them and give them the tools to do their job. They want to make us proud. They want to come home safely. They want to be able to go out for another walk when they come home.

We need to put the money back in the budget. They need over a billion dollars every year for the next five years and that will just stabilize things. Then they need more on top of that. Let us get our priorities straight. Let us get the politics out of it.

Let us do what is right for them. They will do what is right for us. They always have.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, BQ): Mr. Chairman, since the speech we just heard was from the member for Saint John, I would like to take this opportunity to mention that, as everyone knows, she and I share a common interest in shipbuilding.

To follow up on the speech made by my colleague from Mercier, I will point out the lack of proper transportation equipment. It takes ships to transport troops and equipment as heavy as the Coyote.

Does the hon. member think there would be a point, for future peacekeeping missions, in the department of defence being equipped with such material instead of renting it from private companies or foreign governments?

[*English*]

Mrs. Elsie Wayne: Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the question because I want to say that in my riding I have the most modern shipyard there is in Canada, with MIL Davie right next door to us. It was the Liberal prime minister of Canada, Pierre Elliott Trudeau, who came in and gave us the first contract, which we split, and then it was Brian Mulroney who gave us the full contract for the frigate program.

The defence committee has tabled a document on which we on the committee all agreed. It was unanimous that there should be a national shipbuilding policy. That was done by both of the Liberal chairpersons on the defence committee.

What is taking place with the international trade and Norway? If they ever sign that document, we will never build another ship in Canada and we will never have any offshore oil and gas business. We will not even be building ships just to look after the coasts. I can tell members that this is the most serious situation right now.

The government should have brought in a naval shipbuilding policy. We would be putting our people back to work. We had over 4,000 men in my shipyard who built ships, the best ships in the world, along with MIL Davie and the thousands of men who worked there. Now guess what: people are coming up from Louisiana to interview our people and are saying that they are the best shipbuilders they have ever interviewed. They are offering them jobs in the United States, where they have the Jones act to protect them.

I met with vice president Cheney with regard to shipbuilding. Do you know what he told me, Mr. Chairman? I brought up the Jones act and he said "With the Jones act, you're right, Mrs. Wayne". He said I should be taking the Jones act back to the government and we should be looking at it and changing it.

I will tell the House right now: if we ever sign the Norway agreement it will be the biggest disaster for Canada that we have ever seen.

● (2035)

Ms. Susan Whelan (Minister for International Cooperation, Lib.): Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to provide a perspective on the evolving humanitarian situation in Afghanistan.

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My first duty and privilege as Minister for International Cooperation was to represent Canada at the Tokyo conference on reconstruction assistance to Afghanistan. There I officially pledged \$100 million for humanitarian aid and reconstruction assistance on behalf of the Government of Canada as part of the international effort to help rebuild Afghanistan.

From my meetings with the chairman of the Afghan interim administration, Mr. Hamid Karzai, and his finance minister Dr. Abdullah, and with other international partners including U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell, I can tell the House that Canada's contribution is very much appreciated.

Our immediate priorities will include such key areas as health and child survival, gender equality, and security and protection. Our funds will also support the transition from emergency humanitarian activities to peace building and reconstruction programs in Afghanistan and the surrounding region.

As most members would probably know, the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan already was desperate prior to the events of September 11. Two decades of conflict, serious violations of human rights, poverty and three successive years of drought had taken their toll on the country and its people.

Three and a half million Afghans have become refugees in neighbouring countries and a further one million are internally displaced. Government services to the population were almost non-existent. Malnutrition among children was at 50% and community coping mechanisms were stretched to the breaking point. In short, Afghanistan's people were suffering from a serious and protracted humanitarian emergency.

The events following the September 11 attacks further complicated humanitarian operations. Security conditions, including attacks on local staff and premises by combatants, intermittent access to deliver goods and lack of available transport, the withdrawal of international aid staff and the military campaign were all factors that created additional challenges for aid delivery.

Nevertheless throughout the recent crisis aid agencies did their utmost to get supplies in place before winter to assist millions of vulnerable Afghans. The Government of Canada applauds the courageous efforts of the men and women, especially local Afghan staff, who work for the United Nations, Red Cross and non-governmental organizations. Their work, supported by donor governments like Canada, prevented what could have been massive displacement and devastating loss of life.

Protecting and assisting Afghan civilians are longstanding Canadian priorities. My department, the Canadian International Development Agency, has provided over \$160 million in humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan since 1990, including \$16.5 million in response to the current crisis. Our assistance has included support to primary health clinics, food aid for widows, primary education for girls and boys, landmine clearance and help for victims, relief for drought-affected families, and aid for refugees.

Several weeks ago we sent a Canadian-led team of snow removal experts to help the World Food Program in its efforts to keep crucial mountain passes in northern Afghanistan open throughout the current winter.

Canada has been an active participant in the Afghanistan Support Group, the major donor co-ordination body, and has worked closely with the United Nations and other organizations involved in humanitarian policy and aid delivery. As the recent crisis begins to recede, the Government of Canada will continue to provide humanitarian assistance and will participate actively in the reconstruction process.

With the successes of the military campaigns against terrorism, the agreement reached among Afghans in Bonn and the inauguration in Kabul of the interim administration in December, we are seeing the first real opportunity for sustainable and lasting peace in a country that has known only strife for the last 20 years.

While we remain optimistic about recent events and as the world attention shifts toward reconciliation, reconstruction and long term development, we know that peace in the post-Taliban era will be fragile initially and humanitarian aid will continue to be a lifeline for Afghanistan's vulnerable people for the foreseeable future.

The current humanitarian situation can be characterized as mixed. Five million Afghans remain entirely dependent upon food aid and unless the rains come soon, Afghans will be facing a fourth straight year of severe drought. Our partners and CIDA staff in the field tell us that the situation is fragile. Starvation remains a threat in many areas where access for aid convoys is not assured.

Unfortunately, as with most immediate post-conflict situations where peace is not yet fully consolidated, insecurity remains the main obstacle to assistance efforts. The Government of Canada is very concerned by the lack of safety and by reports of lawlessness and banditry, especially in the south and east of the country.

• (2040)

The presence of the international stabilization assistance force in Kabul and the Canadian forces deployment to Kandahar will help to create a stable environment for aid agencies to carry on with their programs. The presence of Canadian soldiers will also help build the confidence of displaced Afghans who can feel more secure in their decision to return home.

Another challenge is the situation of refugees. Recent returns by Afghan refugees from neighbouring countries reflect the optimism which many Afghans have about their country's future. Access to basic necessities and sustainable livelihoods however will be key to encouraging these people to stay.

We appreciate the burden which neighbouring countries have shouldered over the last 20 years in meeting the needs of Afghan refugees. A large portion of the \$160 million which Canada has devoted to humanitarian aid over the past several years has been aimed at Afghan refugees.

We have promoted their protection in neighbouring countries and we have also provided opportunities for resettlement to Canada, welcoming 11,000 Afghans since 1996. We are hopeful that those who want to return to Afghanistan will be able to do so in the near future, once conditions permit.

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Canada intends to allocate significant resources aimed at creating these conditions, assisting with repatriation and ensuring that returnees are protected. We will also support the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to address the needs of those Afghans who will not be able to return. This will hopefully lead to a comprehensive solution for the Afghan refugee population in the region.

As I said earlier, the \$100 million pledge which I made on behalf of the Government of Canada at last week's conference in Tokyo will go a long way toward meeting the urgent needs of those inside Afghanistan and returnees from neighbouring countries. Canada is committed to doing its part to help Afghans in need.

Our sustained commitment and that of the broader international community can help ensure that Afghanistan does not become a forgotten emergency, that it does not fall back into conflict or become a haven for terrorist activity. While Afghans must determine their own future, Canada and other members of the international community can help to create the space for them to build a stable future for themselves.

Mr. Leon Benoit (Lakeland, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the presentation made by the Minister for International Cooperation. She laid out the seriousness of the problem in Afghanistan.

As I listened to the minister's presentation she led me to see that there is no short term fix. In looking at the history of Afghanistan there has been unrest in the country for the past couple of centuries most of the time.

I was in Afghanistan for a few weeks in 1971. The people were so friendly and generous for people who had so little. I was quite taken by the people of Afghanistan.

When listening to the minister it is clear that there is no quick fix. I would like to ask the minister how long her government is prepared to meet a commitment in dealing with this situation. I am not looking at the military side. I am looking at the rebuilding of Afghanistan.

The government has made a commitment and once a commitment is made, it is very hard to back out. Surely the situation has been thought through by the minister and the government and they understand that it is going to be a very long term commitment.

I would like the minister to tell me what her government is prepared to do, how long it expects to be involved in the ways she has talked about.

Hon. Susan Whelan: Mr. Chairman, Canada has a long history of supporting the people of Afghanistan. We have supported them for over 20 years of conflict and drought. Since 1990 approximately \$160 million has been spent. Prior to September 11 we had provided \$12 million in that year alone and since September 11 we have provided an additional \$16.5 million.

I attended the conference in Tokyo to put forward our commitment for humanitarian aid and reconstruction of \$100 million for 2002. Many countries did the same thing. They put forward a one year commitment with the intention of returning to the conference or returning to the same group in the following year as the process continues and the rebuilding and restructuring happens. It is very

important that we create that stable environment, as I said earlier in my speech, for aid agencies to be able to carry on with their work and for the Afghan interim administration to be able to function so there can be stability in the region and so that our dollars can be put to good work.

• (2045)

Mr. Grant McNally (Dewdney—Alouette, PC/DR): Mr. Chairman, I congratulate the minister on her appointment and wish her well in her new capacity.

It is a good thing to be providing aid. I had the opportunity to be in Afghanistan just before Christmas on December 17 and 18 with an NGO group called Samaritans First who are doing excellent work there.

I have two specific questions for the minister. Can she tell us what specific processes are in place to ensure that aid is delivered effectively and in a cost efficient manner to the people who need it most?

When I was at a camp in Afghanistan, aid was being delivered inside the Afghan border itself. As the minister said in her speech, it is now government policy to promote the protection of refugees in neighbouring countries. I wonder if there will be a change in terms of supporting displaced people within their own country, like the 5,500 people in Mile 46 camp in Afghanistan who are within their own borders and are not technically refugees but are in need of help. Would there be a softening of that position on the government's policy side to be able to provide aid in a camp which is not technically a refugee camp but providing—

The Deputy Chairman: The hon. Minister for International Cooperation.

Hon. Susan Whelan: Mr. Chairman, first I would like to address the question of how and whether or not Canadian aid reaches its intended beneficiaries.

We work through a number of organizations such as the United Nations, the Red Cross and other reputable organizations. There is a Canadian team over there ensuring that mountain roads stay open through the snow. We are working very diligently with a number of international organizations in the community.

We recognize the fact that not only have there been five million refugees staying outside Afghanistan, but there are one million within that country who have been internally displaced. We have to recognize that the needs assessment that was done for Afghanistan was done from the outside looking in. In the next month or so a more detailed needs assessment will be coming from the interim authority now that it is back in place. A structure is being set up.

That is why it was critical that we put some dollars into the interim administration. Canada put \$1.5 million a week ago Friday directly into the bank to ensure that the authorities had some dollars to begin, so they could have some stability and pay their government workers. The government can begin and some stability can be brought to the region. The needs assessment can be finished and we can then allocate our \$100 million.

Mr. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Chairman, I also would like to congratulate my colleague on her appointment as the minister responsible for CIDA.

Government Orders

I listened with great interest to her work involving Afghanistan. However over the course of this war over the last couple of months we have not failed to notice that the one group of people affected the most in Afghanistan are women. Women are subjected to beatings and are not allowed to express their concerns. Women are really mistreated in Afghanistan.

Can the minister shed some light on this for us and tell us what steps the government is taking to address that issue? What steps are we taking to protect women in Afghanistan and ensure that they get the aid destined for them in order to help them keep families together?

Hon. Susan Whelan: Mr. Chairman, the member has raised a very important issue.

We know of the plight of women in Afghanistan. Canada strongly believes that women should play an integral role in the formation of the next government and the governing authority for Afghanistan. We welcome the fact that so far two women have been appointed to that interim authority.

Given the general position of women in Afghanistan, the Canadian International Development Agency has strived to ensure when we choose an agency to deliver aid that gender equality be part of that and that we deal specifically with that in the forefront of all of our humanitarian assistance.

We know and believe that Afghan women have a role to play in shaping the future of Afghanistan. We are also working very diligently to examine ways to further support Dr. Sima Samar to assist her in her advocacy work as the new minister of women's affairs and as one of the two women members of the interim administration.

• (2050)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Chairman, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the new minister. However, I would also like to ask her if she is satisfied with the new budget for international assistance. Before the budget, Canada allocated 0.25% of its GDP to international aid.

With the new budget, with the \$500 million going to Africa, if the surplus allows it, which we believe will be the case, this new budget will have Canada contributing 0.266% of its GDP. This will move us from 18th to 19th place among 22 countries.

Yet, it has been said that the fight against terrorism cannot be waged only on security, troops and the search for every last member of al-Qaeda; it must also be based in large part on the ability of the international community to eradicate poverty, educate and provide health care. That is to say nothing of injustices. As a result, now more than ever, international assistance has become an essential tool.

[*English*]

Hon. Susan Whelan: Mr. Chairman, the hon. member's question is very important and I could not agree with her more. The international community must come together and work in co-operation in order to help Afghanistan prepare for the future.

It is also a very strong indication of where the government stands. When we look at the two budgets we have had, the budget of 2000

provided over \$400 million dollars specifically for aid. The budget of 2001 provided \$1 billion in additional aid over three years. When we look at those numbers and at the increase that is there, obviously there is a very strong commitment on behalf of the government to international and foreign aid.

When we work together with countries around the world we can always achieve more. That was one of the messages that came out of the conference in Tokyo that I attended. By working together with our counterparts in other countries we will be able to achieve more in Afghanistan.

Mr. Brian Pallister (Portage—Lisgar, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Chairman, on behalf of my constituents of Portage—Lisgar, I want to add my comments to those made by other members in wishing the very best of safety and security to the Canadian citizens who are representing us abroad. We are thinking of their families as well.

Manitobans have a long tradition, as does the country, of supporting involvement in defence of freedom and of freedom loving people around the world. While reading some Manitoba history the other day I learned from a census that was held during the great war that 123,000 men between the ages of 18 and 45 lived in Manitoba and that of those over 80,000 participated in the great war. Over 80,000 of 123,000 men were members of our armed forces and the vast majority were volunteers.

Manitoba, like many of our provinces, has a very strong feeling of sympathy, support and encouragement for our armed forces as they are involved now. It is because of that tradition and that sensitivity that I have been such a supporter of the Canadian Alliance position in regard to restoring resources to our depleted defence in the country, as have many of my colleagues on all sides of the House voiced their concerns.

It was quite disappointed to hear the comments of the Prime Minister in his Christmas address belittling those who held that position implying that we were tools of the military machine and that somehow we were lobbyists for the arms manufacturers, when nothing could be further from the truth.

When the Prime Minister dismisses the Canadian Alliance, that is fine, I take that as a partisan compliment. However, when he dismisses others, such as his own defence minister and his own former foreign affairs minister, who have also called for further investment in our defence capabilities, that is quite another thing. He has also dismissed the United States ambassador to Canada who has spoken very clearly in favour of increasing investment in defence in this country. He has also criticized the secretary general of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization who has also called on our country to restore its defence investment. He has also criticized the auditor general who has said in her report that there needs to be considerable investment in our defence capabilities.

What the Prime Minister needs to understand is that a majority of Canadians are very supportive of the Canadian Alliance position of increasing resources so we can begin to rebuild our defence capability that has been so badly eroded under his management, or mismanagement as the case may be.

Government Orders

A friend of mine who is a farmer told me that on his farm they do not eat their seed corn. That is exactly what the government has been doing with our defence resources. It has been mortgaging the future and it cannot continue.

I do not want to speak tonight in too great a detail about the lack of resources because I think that issue has been covered. I do know that there has been every indication the government is being made aware of those deficiencies as it tries to conjure up some sense of what it wants to do. I do know there is an absence of a plan. I know the two things are not separate. That is why our party has been calling for a defence and foreign affairs strategy to be developed and will continue to call for it because the two must be done in tandem and they must be done now.

The fact is that when one looks back over the last several weeks and months since September 11 it becomes painfully obvious that the government has no plan, no strategy whatsoever.

First there was the initial delay by the Prime Minister in responding. While other leaders around the world distinguished themselves with their immediate, positive and supportive comments, our Prime Minister remained embarrassingly silent, perhaps waiting for a poll, I am not sure. The fact is that he finally responded by saying that we would be shoulder to shoulder with the Americans. The former foreign affairs minister said that we had no history as a pacifist nation and that there were Canadians buried all over Europe. That is quite true. He caught the sentiments that Canadians felt had been missing from the non-reaction of the Prime Minister. It was good that he said that. He was acknowledged as the *Time* newsmaker of the year for Canada because of his good words. Surely this is about deeds as much as words.

● (2055)

What we need to address today is the fact that there is no plan. Following those initial brave comments, there was embarrassing silence yet again. The Prime Minister said that our peacemakers were there to make peace and that because we loved peace that is what we would be doing. Our defence minister said that we would send a stabilization mission. He then said that we could not send a stabilization mission because the situation was too unstable. That was where we were at up until now: flips and flops. It is like watching a nude man learn how to play the violin in public, not much fun to look at and not much fun to listen to, but that is what has been going on, on the part of the government, for a long time. Now it has made a decision and it says that this decision is the right one. We hope and pray that it is but it is the very definition of ad hoc planning.

Let me quote from the report on Somalia issued in 1997. The government has the opportunity to learn from reports like this. The report stated:

—we found that reckless haste and enthusiasm for high-risk, high-profile action undermined due process and rational decision making....

Perhaps such is the case again.

It further states:

Doctrine, proven military processes, guidelines, formal policy were systematically disregarded....

There is evidence that is the case again.

The deployment therefore began with an uncertain mission, unknown tasks, ad hoc arrangements and unconsolidated relationship to the United States command and unclear rules of engagement....

History repeats itself. Here we are again learning nothing from the past. This is the government's own department reporting to it and yet again we do not know how we are going to treat prisoners of war, we do not know if we have the right resources and we do not know what the terms of engagement are. We are on the threshold of sending Canadians off to a risky venture and we do not know what we want to do. That is a shame. Our Canadian troops deserve a lot better than that.

The fact is that the Prime Minister's hesitation is eminently logical. It has been my experience that if we do not have a vehicle and we do not have a map we probably should not start our trip.

The fact is that we do not have the airlift capabilities to get our own troops there. We are depending on another country. The government has been quick to point out that many countries do not have airlift capabilities but those countries do not declare their involvement before they make arrangements. We did, and that was wrong. It was another mistake. We do not have a roadmap. We do not have a strategy. We do not have a national defence and foreign affairs strategy or framework that clarifies our sovereignty.

Sovereignty is about making choices but if our choices are profoundly limited then we are not sovereign any more. We are not free because our choices are limited. Our choices are extremely limited because of the situation the government has brought us to.

There are some obvious questions that should be asked. We are hitchhiking over. We will be using rental and United States airlift capability. All right. One-third of our Hercules aircraft can fly and two-thirds cannot. We know the JTF2 people had three breakdowns before they could get over with 40 people so we know it is probably a good idea to rent someone else's planes. However, how will we get these people home? Has anyone thought about that yet? We have not had a clear strategy on that. Will they be coming back when the shooting starts? That seemed to be the Prime Minister's attitude in some previous confrontations. Will we be bringing them back when the shooting starts or will the United States be bringing them back or will it bring its people out first? What if the United States wants to carry on to another venue? Suppose it wants to move on to Iraq or to the Philippines. How long do we follow? We have no plan. We have no clear strategy.

We need to enunciate our own sovereignty effectively. We have the opportunity to do that if the government will get its act together.

The threat to sovereignty is very real. Lloyd Axworthy says that it is not an issue now of the government saying no, that it is an issue of the Americans saying jump and us saying how high. However I would say that is like Dr. Frankenstein lamenting a monster of his own creation because the fact is that this depletion did not just begin since that minister left. It started long ago when he was the minister.

Government Orders

The former foreign affairs minister was quite right when he said that we could not just go and hide in the washroom when the bill comes in. However that is exactly where the government has been hiding for eight years and it is time to come out. It is time it stopped flushing Canada's reputation down the toilet.

• (2100)

We, like most Canadians, very much like our American neighbours, but we do not want Washington setting our priorities and dictating our policies. In the absence of any government strategy to propel our own sovereignty forward, we risk being sucked in to the United States orbit. If history repeats itself the government will refuse to accept any responsibility and it will blame gravity for the fall of our sovereignty. God bless our troops.

Mr. Grant McNally (Dewdney—Alouette, PC/DR): Madam Chairman, I thank my colleague for his speech. On behalf of the good people of Dewdney—Alouette I want to add the gratitude and best wishes to our forces that are both in Afghanistan now and on their way. We deeply appreciate their commitment to the cause of democracy, and standing on guard for our nation and for the cause of peace in the world.

I mentioned earlier that I had an opportunity to be in Afghanistan before Christmas with a couple of my colleagues from Medicine Hat and Calgary Northeast. It was apparent in the western part of Afghanistan, given the terrain, given the openness and the lay of the land, that to be wearing green fatigues in that area was simply not a very good idea.

Earlier in debate my colleague from the PC/DR brought up the same point. He questioned who would be shot first if a Canadian wearing green and an American wearing the proper camouflage uniform were to be spotted? Obviously the one with the higher probability would be the person wearing the inappropriate uniform for that area. The Liberal member for Scarborough—Agincourt said no, that the combatants would shoot the American first. I thought that was a totally ridiculous comment.

What would the hon. member's specific suggestions be in terms of a long term plan? I agree with him that the government has not laid that out. Could he expand a bit on the proactive side that opposition members have been bringing forward upon deaf ears for so long. Could he fill us in on that?

• (2105)

Mr. Brian Pallister: Madam Chairman, I thank my hon. colleague for the question. He raises two issues that are both necessary to discuss. One is the issue of the apparel. The Canadian armed forces were equipped some months ago with khaki style camouflage gear. Were that still the case, I do not think the government would be making every effort to try to defend the use of the forest green. The obvious fact of the matter is that our troops would be wearing the khaki apparel because it is more appropriate to the terrain. They are forced, by the fact that there is an absence of choices here, to defend those outfits that are available.

The second aspect is the desperation of the government when it states that once the troops get there and wash them in the Afghanistan water, the outfits will blend in with the desert better or that they can roll around in the dust and they will be able to camouflage that way, or that they will be involved in more night

missions as the apparel is better suited for night missions. These kinds of arguments do not stand up to any scrutiny at all.

In all seriousness, heaven forbid if a Canadian wearing forest green is shot, but if that happens and there is any doubt whatsoever that visibility was a factor, that would be a horrible thing to have happen. All of us on all sides of the House want to make sure that the proper attire is there.

The JTF group were given camouflage blankets. At the very least the government should make every effort to make sure appropriate camouflage is available for the terrain. We know that khaki gear is available. My office did some phoning on Friday and we were able to find 48 different appropriate khaki outfits available from various army surplus stores in 15 minutes. If the government chose to, it could engage some of its many resources in procuring khaki uniforms for at least some of the personnel and we could eliminate the potential for disastrous consequence in that way.

It is dangerous for us to accept at face value the comments some members opposite have made, including the minister, that the forest green attire is appropriate to the circumstance and was the choice of the military. It knew it had no choice because there was no choice.

They are such courageous people that they would wear a red serge and go. They love this country dearly and they know that they want to stand up for Canada and the world. Courage is not an issue with our military people. It is an issue of what is appropriate and giving them the tools for the job.

Mr. Gurmant Grewal (Surrey Central, Canadian Alliance): Madam Chairman, the member made a very intelligent contribution to the debate. Peacekeeping is an integrated process involving many elements. One of the elements is the role of the foreign affairs department. I would like the hon. member to highlight the status of the Liberal government's foreign affairs policy with respect to peacekeeping and preventive diplomacy. As the critic for the official opposition I am sure he will have something to say regarding the military action along with the foreign affairs policy of the nation.

• (2110)

Mr. Brian Pallister: Madam Chairman, that is a question that many Canadians are asking in light of the events and obvious confusion on the part of the government since September 11. Where is the strategy and where is the plan on the part of the government? The government made a choice which we will be debating in the next weeks and months in the House and in committees with great interest.

This is a tectonic shift we are making. We are moving away from being a mid-Atlantic, multilateralist middle power into the realm of United States influence. This is a very major shift and we are doing so in the absence of any major public consultation or discussion. No strategy has been developed and debated among Canadians. That is not the way this should happen.

In 1993 Canada was the leading peacekeeper in the world. We ranked first among all the nations of the world in peacekeeping. Today we are 31st. We are behind Bangladesh and Nepal. We have diminished in terms of our peacekeeping involvement in the world.

Government Orders

If we ask the average Canadian what Canada is famous for and what it is known for around the world the answer would be peacekeeping. We are peacekeepers. It is a reputation we have as a nation and that many Canadians hold dear yet most do not realize the degree to which we have removed ourselves from peacekeeping in the modern age.

Peacekeeping has changed somewhat. It is more demanding and involves more resources. We have the opportunity with proper planning and strategy to resume our rightful place on the world stage, to have the kind of involvement that would excite and encourage Canadians to feel better about our involvement around the world in support of the values we have as a country rather than to exclude ourselves from so many venues.

Gen. Ray Henault, the commander of our military, said we do not have the resources to move to another venue. We are overstretched and at our limits. With our limits being reached our sovereign ability to involve ourselves effectively in other venues where we may be needed around the world is also limited. Our sovereignty as a nation is also threatened by that very real consequence. We have become dependent on another nation, our neighbour to the south, in many respects. We have taken our neighbour for granted in too many respects.

My party and I are glad that we are able to offer support in this effort but we want to see this done as part of an exercise in our Canadian contribution, not as a dependant, not as a surrogate or appendage to the United States but as a nation. That is how we should be added to this effort and that is what we need to be doing now. That is what the government needs to understand.

Mr. Leon Benoit (Lakeland, Canadian Alliance): Madam Chairman, the official opposition foreign affairs critic made some key points. Does the hon. member think that Canada should be prepared as a nation to take part in missions like Afghanistan? If so, how can we as the official opposition, and other members of the opposition, criticize the government for becoming involved in the operation?

Mr. Brian Pallister: Madam Chairman, we are criticizing the ultimate decision itself by criticizing the government's decision making process in arriving at its decision. The reality is that the two are different. The process of arriving at this decision circumvented the involvement of parliament. It short-circuited Canadians in terms of their opportunities for input.

We are aware of that and the difficulties the government faces in making these kinds of difficult decisions but those difficulties are multiplied and exacerbated by the absence of a plan, vision or any kind of guidance other than a poll. Following polls is not the way for us to establish a coherent foreign affairs and defence strategy for the country and yet increasingly the evidence seems to be that it is the prime consideration the government is taking into account in this and in many other foreign affairs decisions it makes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Aileen Carroll (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Chairman, the deployment of the 3rd Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, and a reconnaissance team in Kandahar is the most recent instalment of Canada's enormous contribution to international peace and security.

Canadians have reason to be proud of their country's achievements in peacekeeping. Incidentally, Canadian soldiers continue to take part in peacekeeping missions in the Balkans and in the Middle East.

Our military tradition also includes more ambitious tactical missions, the one in Kandahar being the most recent example of Canadian participation in difficult and complex missions. The nature of our military interventions is, and has always been, determined by circumstances, and, in the case of the Kandahar deployment, the circumstances are clear.

● (2115)

[*English*]

Decades of civil warfare and foreign intervention have left Afghanistan impoverished and susceptible to the kind of extremist governance demonstrated by the Taliban. It had become a safe haven for terrorists who reached far beyond Afghanistan's borders to launch increasingly ruthless terrorist attacks.

The Kandahar deployment is part of a multi-faceted strategy of complementary efforts by an international coalition against terrorism. Our overreaching goal is to foster the development of a stable Afghanistan that can be a secure home for the Afghani people and that will no longer serve as a staging base for terrorist operations.

The deployment of the third battalion of the PPCLI is a significant contribution to the coalition forces in Afghanistan. Our contribution will play an important role in bringing stability and security in and around Kandahar and throughout Afghanistan and will complement the work of the international security assistance force in Kabul.

The Kandahar deployment is part of our overall and ongoing campaign against terrorism. We are also committed to working for the kind of political, social and economic transformation in countries like Afghanistan that will prevent future terrorism from taking root there.

[*Translation*]

We will attain these objectives by aligning our efforts with those of the multi-faceted campaign against terrorism. Military intervention is but one aspect of this international campaign, which also encompasses diplomatic, financial and humanitarian initiatives.

Canada is playing a key role in this broad series of initiatives. On the diplomatic front, we are participating actively in a number of key international organizations, which are making great strides in the fight against terrorism. I am thinking of the United Nations, NATO, the Commonwealth, the Organization of American States, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Francophonie, and the G-8.

As head of the G-8, Canada plays a key role in implementing the global action plan against terrorism. Next February 8 and 9, the finance ministers of the G-7 will be getting together at Meech Lake to consider a number of problems, including the financing of terrorism.

We intend to use our position as head of the G-8 to support the campaign against terrorism and to promote greater global stability.

*Government Orders**[English]*

The United Nations Security Council has appropriately provided the moral lead in this fight by passing a series of resolutions calling on member states to take real action against terrorists. Resolution 1373, for example, calls on states to adopt concrete domestic measures to prevent terrorist funding and deny safe haven, and to support a strengthened multilateral regime against terrorism.

On December 14, Canada was among the first nations to report to the security council on detailed existing counterterrorism measures and new legislation to fulfill our obligations with respect to the implementation of resolution 1373.

On the humanitarian front the Minister for International Cooperation has advised the House of Canada's contribution and commitments. These humanitarian efforts are made in parallel with our military support for the stabilization of Afghanistan.

● (2120)

[Translation]

On the political front, the Deputy Prime Minister travelled to Kabul last Friday, where he met with the Afghan leader, Hamid Karzai, and reiterated Canada's support for the interim administration, as well as its firm desire to restore security in Afghanistan.

Mr. Karzai thanked Canada for its efforts to attain that goal. The same day, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Deputy Prime Minister announced that Canada was re-establishing its diplomatic relations with Afghanistan. This significant gesture underscores our support for the interim administration and our desire to work together with Afghan authorities in Kabul to rebuild the country and improve the lives of its citizens.

[English]

The leaders of the interim authority recognized these challenges when they requested last December that the UN provide an international security force, the ISAF, to assist them in the maintenance of security in Kabul and its surrounding areas. The ISAF has now begun to provide the necessary protection so that the interim authority as well as UN personnel can operate in a secure environment.

During the first three months of its six month mandate the ISAF, as we have discussed tonight, will be led by the United Kingdom. Like all military operations in Afghanistan, the ISAF is operating under the overall command of the United States military as part of the U.S. led military coalition.

[Translation]

The International Security Assistance Force differs from the Kandahar deployment, but also enhances it. These two missions are part of an international action to put in place the conditions and the stability necessary for the reconstruction and the rehabilitation of Afghanistan. We are undertaking the Kandahar mission in concert with the United States, and Canada's battle group will be part of a U. S. army operational force.

[English]

As always this deployment is being made in accordance with international law. Military action in Afghanistan was taken as a last

resort and pursuant to the right of self-defence as recognized under article 51 of the UN charter.

As I mentioned previously, the UN has actively participated in the anti-terrorism campaign through the passage of several new resolutions. UNSC resolution 1378 encourages states to support efforts to ensure the safety and security of areas of Afghanistan no longer under Taliban control.

There is no doubt that the Kandahar mission will be difficult. Canadian forces soldiers, although among the best trained soldiers in the world, will be operating in a dangerous environment but the contribution that the third battalion will make to the coalition against terrorism will help to ensure that terrorists are left with no place to hide in Afghanistan and will help to establish a foundation of security and stability upon which the interim and traditional governments in Afghanistan were built.

The Canadian contribution to the coalition against terrorism on military, political and diplomatic fronts will work to ensure the stability and security of Afghanistan. Canadians can be proud of the contribution the Canadian forces are making to the eradication of terrorism and the creation of a safer and more secure world for the Afghani people and for Canadians.

Mr. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Madam Chairman, I listened with interest to my colleague. However I am just wondering if she could reassure the House or could give us some commitment as to what happens to the combatants of the Taliban when they are captured by Canadian soldiers.

We are hearing on one side the Americans saying that these are unlawful combatants. On the other side we hear mixed signals.

Could my colleague give her version of how she perceives the combatants? Are they POW's? Are they terrorists? What is our position? This is what I would like my hon. colleague, the Parliamentary Secretary to the minister of Foreign Affairs, to define for us.

● (2125)

Ms. Aileen Carroll: Madam Chairman, at the outset of the debate this evening the Minister of National Defence quoted the Minister of Foreign Affairs earlier when he commented that we would not outsource our moral obligations. In that regard he discussed that indeed Canada endorsed and stood by the need for a tribunal to determine the difference in the status of prisoners as to whether they are POWs, prisoners of war or non-lawful combatants.

In the meantime Canada will ensure the application of international humanitarian law. The Minister for National Defence said we would ensure the Americans maintained their commitment that all prisoners would be treated fairly and humanely.

It is not an easy discussion. It is one that indeed has been embarked upon in the United States. However Canada's position was made very clear by the Minister of Foreign Affairs today in saying that we will maintain the application of international humanitarian law.

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, BQ): Madam Speaker, I rise this evening as my party's critic on Asian issues and also as a member of the Sub-Committee on Human Rights and International Development.

A number of Bloc Québécois members are part of a team on foreign issues led by the hon. member for Mercier who, as always, delivered an excellent speech this evening. I take this opportunity to congratulate her.

I am taking part in this debate for the reasons I just mentioned. However, I should say that it is first and foremost as a parliamentarian that I must take part in this debate. This is an extremely important issue. We all agree on this.

However, when there is a debate, I must represent my constituents. I must speak and vote on their behalf. I know that when we have to vote on behalf of our constituents, most Bloc Québécois members, including myself, take time to consult them. Some of them are easy to consult, because they call us at our riding offices and tell us what they think. So, we listen to them. We listen to these people, who tell us what they think. It is not always pretty. They are not always kind to the government.

However, the motion moved this evening by the House leader is almost insulting. In fact, it is insulting. Since there are not very many parliamentarians here, I will not get overly upset. But if there were more of us in the House this evening, I would. But right now, we are almost among friends here.

The House leader proposes that this House "take note of the deployment of Canadian forces personnel in Afghanistan". It does not take long to take note of something. In fact, this was done a long time ago. Of course, we are given an opportunity to speak. We are doing so and we should. I hope that the Liberals will not regret it at the end of the debate, because even though they will not let us vote, they are letting us talk.

May I remind members of certain commitments made by the Liberals when they were in opposition. It is interesting to look at this in the context of tonight's debate. In 1990, we had the gulf war. The House leader of the Liberal Party proposed an amendment to a motion brought forward by the Secretary of State for External Affairs of the Conservative government of the day. The amendment read as follows:

Liberals insist that before Canadians are called upon to participate in any offensive action, such participation must first be brought before Parliament and voted on here in the way it was done at the time of the Korean conflict.

This happened in the House regarding a motion brought forward by the Conservative government of the day. But then the Liberals published a red book in 1993, which said this, and I quote:

We will continue to support democracy and respect for human rights worldwide and will provide for a more open foreign policy-making process. A Liberal government will also expand the rights of Parliament to debate major Canadian foreign policy initiatives, such as the deployment of peacekeeping forces, and the rights of Canadians to regular and serious consultation on foreign policy issues.

The Liberals were saying that they would do more than the Conservatives, and yet the Conservatives had given parliament an opportunity to vote.

Of course, after one mandate, there was an election. What did the 1997 red book say? Let us have a look.

An independent, effective Canadian foreign policy cannot be achieved without the active participation of Canadians, through public and non-governmental organizations. Under this Liberal government, Parliament and committees of Parliament are offering Canadians more opportunities than ever before to participate in the formulation of foreign policy.

• (2130)

What fine words. What wonderful sentiments. But what is even more shocking is that this did not even reflect what was really going on. Like the other Bloc members, I was here between 1993 and 1997. I recall the consultations by the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development on the changes to social programs. Members of the public were consulted. They were consulted, but they were not told where the government intended to make cuts.

It is good to recall the promises, as I have just done, but it must be said that this supposed peacekeeping mission does not fall entirely within the tradition to which we have become accustomed under various Canadian governments, starting with Lester B. Pearson.

This mission is under American, not UN, supervision. I understand that the UN has opted to put the British in charge in Kabul. If, for example, we had been in the Kabul area, it would have meant another approximately 200 troops, technicians and engineers, people who would have been thinking of how best to get humanitarian aid through.

Let us talk about this humanitarian aid. The member for Mercier quite rightly reminded us that humanitarian aid has increased by only one-tenth of 1%. If memory serves, it has gone from 0.25% to 0.26%. This is not even half of the objective that OECD countries set, the famous 0.7% of GDP of member countries. Canada is trailing among OECD nations in this regard. It is also trailing among the G-7 and G-8 nations.

Human rights have been mentioned. I would like to remind the House of one thing. Whether we are talking about prisoners, terrorists or criminals, human rights are involved. The Canadian and Quebec tradition is to consider these people human beings. They must be treated as such. The Geneva convention must also be respected, whether in connection with the transportation or the capture of prisoners. Once they are prisoners, they must be treated according to the terms of the Geneva convention.

But the Canadian forces have no means of holding them; so they must hand them over to the Americans in the hope that they will respect the Geneva convention. If only they were being tried in American civil courts. Here again, there is cause for concern, because we know that certain American states, including the one once governed by the current U.S. president, still have the death penalty.

The majority of Canadians have always opposed this. But no, now there is talk of the military courts being in Cuba and away from American and world opinion.

Government Orders

Human rights means the right to a proper diet, to health, to a decent life. There are millions in Afghanistan, more than 1.5 million, who have been displaced within the country, and even some outside of it. These people are entitled to international aid. Those are human rights. I would like to hear more discussion of that this evening, and we have not had it.

How can terrorism be fought? Poverty is fertile ground for terrorism, it is said. So we should be talking about doing away with poverty, if we want to talk about human rights.

In the little time remaining to me, I would like to touch on the interests of my riding as far as this type of intervention is concerned, that is military equipment. I would like to talk about the smart ship. In 1998 the Canada 2000 council made the recommendation that Canada ought to have at least two of these to carry military equipment and personnel, but not for just any mission, particularly for peacekeeping missions. These ships could also be used in times of natural disaster.

• (2135)

This would be useful, but no. Despite the consultations with the Canada 2000 council, nothing was done. Yet there have been many other very serious situations before Afghanistan. Once again Canada is being caught with its pants down—there is no other way of putting it.

[*English*]

Mr. Grant McNally (Dewdney—Alouette, PC/DR): Madam Chair, I thank my colleague for his speech. I particularly thank him for pointing out the comments in the red book the Liberals committed to when in opposition in terms of having a vote on the deployment of troops.

Since the Liberals became the government I do not remember one time when that has happened. We have had take note debates which we appreciate but we do not have an opportunity to vote in support of the government's notion of doing this. Allowing us the opportunity would help the government, not hinder it.

I also agree with my colleague when he says we should be concentrating on the aid we need to deliver to people in need in Afghanistan. When I had the opportunity to be in Afghanistan in December on a brief trip with a non-governmental organization called Samaritans First to provide aid to displaced people in Afghanistan, I saw how crucial it was and how thankful the people were.

We need to concentrate not only on CIDA contributions to Afghanistan but on NGOs and the good work they are doing. I have nothing but high praise for the group I was with, its administration of aid, its ability to do quite a lot with little resources, and the way it was able to co-operate with the government of Iran. We were in southern Iran and the Iranian government was very helpful in arranging visas and dealing with all the red tape that needs to happen for such a trip to take place.

Would my colleague agree that we should proceed on a two pronged approach of not only encouraging the government to provide aid through CIDA but of providing any support we can, not just with funds but with the paperwork and steps necessary to help

NGOs provide aid to those most in need who have been displaced in Afghanistan?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Antoine Dubé: Madam Chairman, the member is absolutely right, and we seem to forget this all too often. Of course there is CIDA, but there are also non-governmental organizations bringing together a considerable number of people around the world who work to help countries experiencing difficulties. Among these people, there are obviously Canadians, but there are also Quebecers.

Quebec has a tradition of participating in charitable works. This is what it used to be called, as it was often religious communities that were involved. We can never thank them enough for their dedication, often at the risk of their lives, and health. They do with very little.

Despite the negative publicity about NGOs and the money donated to them not always making it to those who need it—as it must happen from time to time—we must understand that there are often problems in these countries involving the military. At least, the money that does make it, however small the amount, makes a difference.

What the hon. member spoke of—he saw it with his own eyes—is that it does do some good. I think we need to encourage Canadians and Quebecers to do more. The best is to involve CIDA, of course, and better yet, when necessary, as is currently the case, the Canadian Forces to go and assist in the deployment of humanitarian aid and to ensure that it is carried out in as safe a way as possible for both those who are receiving aid and those who are distributing it.

However, we must be careful what we ask of NGOs. I have heard some Liberals today mention the Red Cross. The role of the Red Cross must remain unchanged. In order to preserve its role of helping the injured and the sick, the Red Cross must remain neutral. It must not be seen to be working at the behest of any particular country, including Canada. It must be supported, and its role, as I have described it, must be understood.

I thank the hon. member for his question and I see that he is sensitive to these issues. The year 2002 should mark the beginning of a new era to improve the distribution of assistance, not only food, but also humanitarian assistance, to those who need it, particularly those who must cope with human rights violations.

• (2140)

[*English*]

Mr. Grant McNally: Madam Chairman, I will make a final comment rather than a question because there is a bit of time.

Government Orders

Following up on what my colleague said in response to my question, I forgot to mention in that Samaritans First is a Christian non-governmental organization which provides international relief. My colleague mentioned a lot of good work done by church groups. This one also involves community groups. If anyone is aware of Operation Christmas Child or the shoebox program, and I know many people are, Samaritan's Purse is the group that spearheads it internationally. Aid is sent both from Quebec and other parts of the country. I wanted to mention that and neglected to.

The group is also able to work with Islamic partners in other parts of the world. The Red Crescent is intricately involved in administering the camp I was at, Mile 46 camp in southwestern Afghanistan which is right on the border with Iran.

Rather than ask a question I thought I would take the opportunity to clarify my earlier comments. I appreciate my colleague's speech.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Antoine Dubé: Madam Chairman, this is not really a question, but a comment to further the debate.

It is thanks to such comments that, when all is said and done, we can find, if not a justification, at least a positive effect for a debate like this one. If I am repeating this it is because I am thinking about those who may be listening to us or who may read the *House of Commons Debates* on the Internet.

I am also thinking about people from other countries. I am thinking of Columbia and all that is going on there right now. We do not talk about them as much, but some serious things are going on in certain countries. I will travel to Columbia with a delegation in about 15 days. We must not forget such countries, even though we hear less about them. Afghanistan must not make us forget other serious situations in the world. We could also talk about Sudan. It must be recognized that talking about this issue has a positive effect. There are people listening to us. There are NGOs and citizens in the civil society who take action. Without being overly naive, it is a fact that over time a better education system and greater participation by citizens will prevent a reoccurrence of what happened in Afghanistan.

• (2145)

[*English*]

Mr. David Pratt (Nepean—Carleton, Lib.): Madam Chairman, I appreciate the opportunity to address the House this evening on this very important subject. As we speak, members of the Canadian forces from the 3rd Battalion of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry Battle Group are preparing for their deployment to Afghanistan. There they will operate alongside American forces in Kandahar.

As the minister of defence has stated, this is not a peacekeeping mission. The military campaign in Afghanistan is clearly not over. In Afghanistan they will perform a variety of tasks which the minister has already outlined and some of which may involve combat.

I assure members of the House that our military has the tools it needs to do the job. As a result, when the battle group arrives in Kandahar it will do so not only as an elite unit with a truly legendary reputation but as a modern combat capable force with some of the most advanced equipment in the world.

One obvious example is the Coyote, a light armoured, high tech reconnaissance vehicle made in Canada with Canadian technology. The Coyote functions as a set of eyes and ears for field commanders, providing them with an accurate picture of the battlefield. It is a platform for an array of advance surveillance systems. It has a television camera, radar, thermal imaging, laser, range finders and systems for storing data. It also has a turret mounted 25 millimetre gun.

It can spot a tank 12 kilometres away and larger targets at twice that distance. It has systems that can detect the presence of nuclear, biological and chemical agents on the battlefield and other systems to protect its crew from these agents.

The Coyote was designed to move rapidly into service in hot spots all over the world, to operate efficiently when required in a wide variety of terrain, in other words for missions just like Afghanistan. It can travel 100 kilometres an hour on roads but it does not depend on roads or on anything but its own eight wheels. It is an all-terrain vehicle. It can climb 60% grades. It can cross trenches two metres wide.

The Coyote did an absolutely superb job with the Canadian forces in Kosovo, Ethiopia, Eritrea and in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia where its performance attracted enthusiastic attention from our allies. Today it is widely considered to be the very best surveillance vehicle in its class anywhere in the world. In fact when the United States invited Canada to send a military force to Kandahar it specifically requested our Coyotes.

Another example of modernization in Canadian military gear is the troops combat clothing. Since 1995 through the clothe the soldier program the Canadian forces are being re-equipped from head to foot with advanced state of the art protective clothing and equipment, all designed to enhance the survivability and sustainability of soldiers.

Specifically the troops will be equipped with a new lighter weight protective vest with an improved helmet and suited for the high tech battlefield and with bullet resistant plates which are an add-on to this vest and provide greater ballistic protection front and back. Our soldiers will have all of this with them in Afghanistan.

Certain members of the opposition have raised two issues which in my view are completely bogus and completely fraudulent. They are the issue of the type of camouflage clothing our troops are wearing and the issue of strategic lift.

Let me deal with the camouflage issue first. When our strategic reconnaissance unit went into Kandahar, that is the small group of soldiers including Lieutenant Colonel Pat Stogran, the commanding officer of the PPCLI, one of the decisions he had to make was which camouflage pattern to use. Although the new temperate woodland pattern was recently issued to our troops, the commanding officer of the PPCLI had the option of going with the new pattern or having DND buy desert camouflage uniforms from some of our allies. That was an option which existed for the commanding officer and the clothing was available from our allies.

Government Orders

The commander of the PPCLI purposely chose the temperate woodland pattern. He was supported in that decision by the chief of the land staff of the army and by the chief of the defence staff.

• (2150)

I am not an expert on camouflage and I am certainly not a military expert, but if the commander of the battalion has made a decision backed up by two senior generals then frankly that is good enough for me. I suspect Lieutenant Colonel Stogram made that decision because of the special coating on the temperate woodland patterned uniforms that we have which make them less detectable to infrared imaging. It is also quite possible that the commanding officer made that decision because many of the operations will be conducted at night.

It is interesting to note as well that the French, the Germans and the British army are wearing uniforms similar to the temperate woodland camouflage pattern that our troops are wearing.

It is also important to draw attention to the fact that the Americans, who are wearing the desert pattern, are also wearing flak jackets and other kits which are similar to our temperate woodland camouflage pattern. The Americans in fact are wearing a mix of two camouflage patterns.

It is also worthwhile mentioning that our troops have winter white uniforms for possible operations in mountain conditions at higher altitudes in Afghanistan.

Therefore let me repeat that our troops are fully equipped and fully trained for the mission ahead. What is clear from all of this is that there are a lot of armchair generals in the opposition who are unfortunately, and I would say regrettably, prepared to second guess our generals. The principal qualification of these critics appears to be that they watched a lot of war movies.

Those people who criticize the use of this combat clothing are coming very close to criticizing the integrity and professionalism of Canada's military leaders. They are also unduly and irresponsibly alarming the families of soldiers and Canadians in general. Do these critics really believe that our senior officers would put Canadian troops in a situation where the risk is unacceptable?

A final topic I would like to address is what the military calls strategic lift, the ability to transport our forces to theatre over long distances. The minister stated in early January that the troops would be in theatre by mid-February. Suddenly all these stories appeared in the media aided by a bunch of pseudo-experts in the opposition saying that we would not be able to get our troops to Afghanistan. This we were told was a scandal for Canada, a blow to our national prestige, a reason to bow our heads in shame. My God, we were coming up short again.

What are the facts of the situation? The facts are that only two of our NATO allies, the U.S. and the U.K., have strategic lift capability. In this operation even the Americans are using some rented transport aircraft. The other NATO allies, at least two of which are twice our size, do not have strategic lift capability either. The French and the Germans routinely have to rely on rented or leased strategic airlift to move personnel and equipment over long distances. Do the French and the Germans have second rate militaries? I do not think so. What

about the Italians, the Spanish, the Norwegians, the Poles and our other NATO allies? Are they all second rate too?

How are we actually getting into the theatre of operations? For this mission the Canadian forces will be using a combination of Canadian and U.S. military airlift and rented civilian transport planes. The Canadian lift has been and will continue to be provided by the airbus and the C-130.

Just on that topic, I think it is also worth noting that Canada has in terms of tactical airlift the third largest fleet of Hercules in the world. Guess what? The troops are to be in Afghanistan in mid-February, just as the minister said in early January. That is some scandal.

Is there room for improvement in our military strategic lift capabilities? Of course. Rapid reaction is vital. The Department of National Defence is reviewing the options available within its budget to enhance these capabilities. Other allies are making the same sorts of arrangements as far as lift capability is concerned.

Let me close by saying that the men and women of the 3rd Battalion of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry Battle Group face a difficult mission. There is no doubt about that. However they have what it takes to do the job: modern weapons and modern equipment combined with the traditional assets of courage and professionalism which they and their predecessors have brought to the battlefield throughout our history. That is a hard combination to beat.

• (2155)

Mr. Rob Anders (Calgary West, Canadian Alliance): Madam Chairman, does my colleague across the way think that Lewis MacKenzie or the Canadian Defence Association, just as examples, happen to be armchair critics of the government? Would he accuse them of not having the soldiers first in mind when they go ahead and make criticisms based on what his government does?

Mr. David Pratt: Madam Chairman, I think what the hon. member is referring to is not the Canadian Defence Association but the Conference of Defence Associations and retired General Lewis MacKenzie, both of which, I should add, as soon as the government announced that it would be deploying troops to Afghanistan supported the government's announcement. I think it was very clear in their comments that both thought the deployment was important.

I have heard nothing to suggest that retired General MacKenzie, or for that matter the CDA, feels that our troops are going into theatre underequipped and not properly trained.

Mr. Rob Anders: Madam Chair, the hon. member across the way is taking great licence with regard to my question. I am referring to an open letter that Lewis MacKenzie wrote to the Prime Minister, which I read. Would he tell us whether he thinks the criticisms of Lewis MacKenzie, because of the Prime Minister's comments with regard to his Christmas address, were just armchair criticisms of someone who did not know what he was talking about?

Mr. David Pratt: Madam Chair, the hon. member clearly is trying to drag some red herrings through the debate here. In terms of some of the comments that retired general MacKenzie, the CDA and the auditor general have made about the long term funding of the military, the defence committee has said similar things in asking for increased funding.

Government Orders

What we are talking about tonight is very clear. The hon. member seems to be switching gears from some of the comments made by some of his colleagues in the Alliance. The Canadian troops, the 3rd battalion of Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, that are going into Afghanistan have the equipment and the training they need to do the job. That is very clear.

Yes, there are issues related to strategic lift capability that will have to deal with in the future. Also, there are other issues related to equipment purchasing and to the size of the force and training. However it is very important to convey to Canadians a message that is very clear, a message which is being distorted and completely obfuscated by members of the opposition, and that is the Canadians who will be in Afghanistan have the equipment and the training, and they will do us proud.

Mr. John O'Reilly (Haliburton—Victoria—Brock, Lib.): Madam Chair, I want to interject here because I know my friend from Nepean—Carleton was the chair of the committee, and he is trying to deal with the member for Calgary West.

Although I admire him, the main objective of the member for Calgary West when he was a member of the Reform Party was to be a member of the snack pack. I do not think he knows the difference between a Sea King and a Burger King.

When Lewis MacKenzie wanted to run for parliament, he came to the Prime Minister and asked him for what party he should run. The Prime Minister advised him to run as a Liberal. Lewis MacKenzie decided he would run for the Conservative Party which won two seats and the Prime Minister won 172. I do not know that I would want to follow Lewis MacKenzie into battle with that kind of judgment.

The member for Nepean—Carleton talked about lift capacity and that type of thing. Was he quoting statistics that indicated, for instance, that Canada had the third largest Hercules fleet in the world? Where did the member get those statistics? Perhaps he could comment on exactly what Canada's lift capability in the military is? With the largest budget in Ottawa, exactly where we are coming from?

• (2200)

Mr. David Pratt: Madam Chair, let me provide a little background on that. I had the honour to go to Trenton to bid farewell to the members of 8 Wing in Trenton, the three Hercules and their crews that will be deployed to Afghanistan. Naturally I asked a few questions of some of our military staff in Trenton.

I can tell the hon. member, whom I am sure has been there before, that Trenton is a fabulous base with a long history in terms of the Canadian military. It opened in 1929, probably one of the older bases in North America.

The information about having the third largest Hercules fleet came from some of my conversations in Trenton. I can tell the members who are here tonight that the members of 8 Wing to whom I spoke were very anxious to get into the theatre of operations and make a contribution. Obviously there was some apprehension among the families of the members who would be away for six months or so.

One thing I find regrettable is the fearmongering that has taken place tonight. Members should think about the impact of some of the

comments they make and think about whether they just want to score political points or whether they are expressing a genuine concern on behalf of the men and women of the Canadian forces and the future of the Canadian forces as a whole.

Mr. Rob Anders (Calgary West, Canadian Alliance): Madam Chairman, I heard today that the replacement for the Sea Kings has been set back another six months on top of the already delayed schedule. I heard that from another member of the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs, a colleague of mine, not from my party, but I trust that what he tells me is fairly accurate.

I would like the member across the way to corroborate whether or not Sea Kings have been set back another six months on the replacement schedule. Is that true?

Mr. David Pratt: Madam Chairman, I am not going to comment on things that the hon. member may have heard in the corridors around Parliament Hill. From the standpoint of the defence committee, members have recommended that the government try to speed up the process for the acquisition for the Sea King replacement helicopters.

At the same time, I can inform the hon. member that I was on a Sea King helicopter less than a month ago in the Persian Gulf and it was operating very well. It transported myself and the Minister of National Defence out to the HMCS *Preserver*. In speaking to some of the crew members, from what I gather the Sea Kings are very well maintained and perform extremely well in that environment.

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore, NDP): Madam Chairman, when they spend 30 hours of maintenance for every hour of flight time, yes the Sea Kings would operate under certain conditions especially with the minister aboard. That is one of the problems. It takes that long for the government to replace a helicopter system.

I have great respect for the member who just spoke. As chairman of the Standing Committee on Defence and Veterans Affairs, he has done yeoman's work in our committee. He has really solidified what the committee can do outside of the House of Commons, working in committee and bringing consensus to what the military requires.

However he must know that the opposition will ask questions such as on Sea King replacements, et cetera. Also the minister himself today in this take note debate said there was a change of deployment in November from the troops going over in a peacekeeping role to a more combative role. When those types of changes happen, one would assume that questions would be asked.

My question for him is why the extensive delay on such a thing as the Sea Kings? Why would he assume we are trying to score political points when he knows very well that it is our role in opposition to ask pertinent questions when it comes to the military?

• (2205)

Mr. David Pratt: Madam Chairman, there is no question there have been some delays in the procedure for acquiring a new replacement for the Sea King. As the committee has said, and as I have said, I am hoping we can speed that up.

Government Orders

In reference to some of the members of opposition, I do not necessarily lump this particular member in with some of the others who have described the Sea King very irresponsibly and in a fearmongering fashion as a flying coffin. Those are not the sort of comments that are very helpful in this sort of a situation.

Mr. Rob Anders (Calgary West, Canadian Alliance): Madam Chairperson, tonight I was taking in an event hosted by our illustrious Speaker, a Robbie Burns Night. As I watched the dancers do their sword dance, I thought of what a wonderful military ethos and culture that was displayed in some of those Burns night events.

It made me think, in terms of the purpose of this speech, about Canada's military history. It made me think of Canada putting a million people to arms in the first world war, when we had a population of only 11 million. When the first mustard gas attacks came, Canadians had a record of being able to move forward when the other nations retreated. Then in the second world war, we once again put a million people to arms. Canadians also did service in Korea.

I point out that a lot of our Canadian lads returned home because they had had landmines. I know it is a politically incorrect subject to address these days, but nonetheless many of their lives were saved because when human wave attacks came they had landmines to defend themselves. It was a good defensive weapon, and it worked for them.

With the government's recommendations to get rid of landmines, we have had to reclassify them as offensive weapons to save the lives of Canadians because the politicians did not want to do that. I commend them for reclassifying them.

The state of our military is 50,000 and slipping. We have a situation where the regular forces are cannibalizing the militia and our reserves because their budgets are tight and they are on high rotations. To get whatever resources they possibly can, they squeeze blood from a stone. The reserves, which should be there to back up the regular forces and to do their bidding when the time comes and fill in, instead are being cannibalized. Therefore our regular soldiers run on even higher rotations. It is a sad scenario.

I would like to lay out not just what I think are some of the failings of the government in terms of what it has done to our military tradition, but also what I hope will be done for them.

I would like to see us have a regular force of 100,000, and frankly that still falls short of what we had the 1960s, over 40 years ago when our population was much less than what it is today.

I have another hope. I would like to see the budget for national defence probably doubled in Canada. I know that is probably a controversial statement these days as well. Nonetheless, over the last 30 years we have seen elements of government grow that were not the original functions of government.

Defence of our boundaries and being able to protect our national interests and safeguard our borders is one of the most fundamental things that a nation does for its citizens. We would be well advised to spend money in those efforts rather than in some of the income redistribution and various other programs the government has seen fit to push and promote over the last 30 years.

I spoke about those helicopters which the chairman of SCONDVA is so apt to talk about. He did not like the fact that I called them flying coffins. He has ridden on them and so have I. I remember being given clear instructions by the flight crews that if that chopper went down, we had to figure out our bail instructions and we had three minutes to get out of that thing before it sank beneath the waves. They knew how long it took for a Sea King to sink. Why did they know that? Not because it came in the specs but because they have actually lived it. That is why and it is sad.

● (2210)

The idea that we are setting back the replacement by six months, the idea that the minister or others for that matter made public relations flights in these aircraft to try to prove that they are safe when we know they are not is merely trying to mislead the public. Who is playing politics with lives there?

I am asking to have more money put into national defence so it has the right equipment to save lives. Maybe I am playing politics to make sure that the budget doubles and national defence gets what it deserves because military personnel put their lives on the line for this country. However, when I hear Liberals across the way talk about playing politics while they go ahead and do those PR-type campaigns, to take a perfectly egregious situation where, for every single hour of flight these aircraft have to have 30 hours of repair time and only then in good weather conditions do they operate, for the Liberals to accuse and say that we are playing politics because we want to have those things replaced is sick.

We had the airborne years ago and it was disbanded. Now I hear the Liberals bandy about the JTF2. The airborne was a much larger force. It was an elite unit and it was disbanded. The government at that time seized on an issue of a hazing ritual.

I have been in national defence for a few years. I have heard a different side of that story. It was not actually a matter of a hazing ritual. That indeed was trumped about and a video was used and promulgated across the country as a reason to get rid of the airborne. My understanding is that the real reason the airborne was disbanded was to cover up the financial liabilities the government would have for those in the airborne who got sick on duty because of missions they were asked to execute by the government.

I will ask again, who was playing politics there when a force of 1,000 men, Canada's elite fighting force, was disbanded because the government failed to live up to and recognize the liability it had for the health of those men?

Mr. Peter Stoffer: We dared to ask the question.

Mr. Rob Anders: My colleague across the way said that the opposition dared to ask a question and the government called disrepute upon us for asking the question. It is a shame.

Government Orders

I only have but a few on my list, but there are many longer lists than this one, of the people the Liberals across the way tonight have accused of being armchair critics of the government who only like to watch videos. Weekend warriors, I am sure was the analogy. I read the letter that Lewis MacKenzie actually sent to our Prime Minister. That man served us loyally in uniform for a very long time and felt disgraced at the way the Prime Minister dealt with the issues, saying that anybody who asked questions, anybody who raised issues whatsoever with regard to funding of the armed forces was somehow a merchant of the arms industry.

I do not own any stock. I used to before I came to this place. I would like to add that I have never owned a share that I think in any way whatsoever had anything to do with the armed forces of this country or procurement for that matter with regard to those things.

The idea that I, the Conference of Defence Associations, or people like Lewis MacKenzie, Jack Granatstein, the auditor general, or David Burkeson, and the list goes on, are merchants of the arms industry according to our Prime Minister, I would argue that our Prime Minister is a merchant of death if he believes that. Let him take that and challenge it. I would argue that by his going ahead and putting people in helicopters that are not fit fly, he is a merchant of death. I would say that if the Prime Minister is sending our troops into combat without the equipment they deserve, he is a merchant of death.

Colleagues around me are saying that is strong language. Nonetheless lives have been lost because of the types of things the government has done or forgotten to do and by which it has abused our military. It is a shame.

If I get called names tonight, by golly I will fire them back across the aisle. I will level the accusations as I see fit.

• (2215)

It should not be this way. The way it should work is when the resources are needed, they should be ponied up by the government and given gladly for these people. They have made a contract with us, a pact that in order for me not to die on the front line, in order for my freedoms to be preserved, the innocents have taken on an incredible contract with the rest of us. In order for our civilization to flourish and remain peaceful, they are willing to put their lives at risk, to shed their blood for ours. In light of that contract they should be honoured with the type of materials they deserve when they do that job for us.

Mr. John O'Reilly (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Chairman, I always enjoy listening to the member for Calgary West. He is kind of a free spirit. He has this vision of the world which is something that only fits some kind of description no one else has. As I said earlier, I enjoyed it when he was a member of the Reform snack pack. I realized at that time that he did not know the difference between a Sea King and a Burger King and I was able to accept that. When he stood in the House and said that Nelson Mandela was some kind of terrorist, I kind of accepted that as maybe his being young and immature.

However I find out now that he is promoting the airborne. At the end of the airborne's era it had 600 members. He has indicated it had thousands, that it was some huge contingent of wonderful people. It

had 600 people when it was disbanded. These people went to Somalia and killed people when they were supposed to be on peacekeeping missions. They caused great shame to this country.

The member talked about Lewis MacKenzie. What did Lewis MacKenzie do during his watch? I would like to know what the member thinks Lewis MacKenzie did during his watch. His political career was one where the Prime Minister advised him that if he wanted to be on the winning side he should run as a Liberal. Instead he ran for the Conservatives. They won two seats and the Prime Minister won 174 seats. I know who I would want to follow into battle with those kinds of statistics.

How could the member possibly think that the airborne has some resonance? Canada was totally embarrassed by the airborne. It went out and killed people for no reason whatsoever. At its disbandment there were 600 of them. Where does the member get these thousands he talked about? What possible resonance could he have to that? Has the member given any serious thought to this or is he just picking this off for some political expediency so he can get re-elected in Calgary West and everybody will love him because he is such a great rebel? He has not provided any facts.

Would he table these facts he is talking about? So far, they are closer to *Aesop's Fables* than anything anyone in this House has ever heard before. He should table this information. Otherwise, he should step down and apologize for his silly remarks.

• (2220)

Mr. Rob Anders: Madam Chair, I know the member across the way may have difficulty accepting this, but nonetheless I will say it.

The airborne was an elite unit and it took on some of the bloodiest and toughest missions. He can sit over there and decry and run down the airborne as best he sees fit, but nonetheless members of the airborne were parachuting behind enemy lines and suffering huge losses so they could take out bridges, various communications infrastructure and whatnot during the second world war. Then they fought their way back to the front lines to once again be parachuted behind enemy lines to risk life and limb, suffer huge casualties and fight their way back to the front line. That happened time and time again. The forces were decimated or worse each time. The member said who needs the airborne and that the airborne was a disgrace, and he accuses me of not knowing history. These men made the ultimate sacrifice.

The weird thing about the people across the way is that when terrorists get rounded up, they talk about their rights. Whatever happened to the rights of the people who died in the World Trade Center? What about the people who died in the Pentagon? What about the people who died in Pennsylvania? It is a joke that the people across the way are so wrapped up in these terrorists and whether or not they are being treated right. Where are the priorities of the government?

It is a shame when I see members across the way use the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs to bandy about the rights of terrorists instead of talking about getting the resources for our men and women who are putting their lives at risk for this country. It is a crying shame.

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The media in this country does not focus on the rights of victims and on punishing and getting the terrorists. It provides ammunition and fodder for these people who would go ahead and misplace priorities. That is a shame too.

I would like the member across the way who asked me about the airborne to think of the sacrifices the airborne made for him for his freedoms during the second world war. Do not decry and run down the airborne so heavily.

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore, NDP): Madam Chair, I picked up on one item the hon. member for Calgary mentioned, that various people who criticize the government and the Prime Minister asking for more additional resources would be merchants of the arms industry.

Lo and behold the reality is that the Liberal members of the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs, of which the parliamentary secretary is a member, along with members of the other political parties, also asked for additional resources for the military. I would hardly call the parliamentary secretary, the chairperson of the standing committee, the other seven Liberals, the NDP, the Bloc or anyone else merchants of the arms industry. I would like him to comment on that.

My parents and oldest brother were liberated by the Canadian military in 1945. Back then the government paid attention to the needs of the military knowing full well that men and women would pay the ultimate liability. However it is the government that has the ultimate responsibility in terms of making sure that the men and women have every tool at their disposal and clear indications of what their role is. I would like the hon. member to comment on that please.

• (2225)

Mr. Rob Anders: Madam Chairman, in defence of some of the members across the way who were catcalling and calling me names tonight I will say that of all the committees I have served on I like SCNDVA the best. The reason I say that is because despite the names they called me this evening I think deep down a lot of the people who serve on the committee really care. That is one of the reasons I enjoy serving on the committee.

I do not think the hon. members are merchants of the arms industry to ask for the resources the troops need, yet they asked for them. I applaud them for that. I wish that when it was not in the quiet confines of a closed meeting with SCNDVA they would say the same things here.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Clifford Lincoln (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Madam Chairman, there is certainly consensus in the House regarding international terrorism, which we all reject unanimously. We also clearly reject the tragic events of September 11.

Thus was born an international coalition, supported by the United Nations, which has had very positive results up to now: the fall of the Taliban government in record time—we would not have imagined such quick results—the creation of a government sanctioned by the international community under the auspices of the United Nations, and eventually, elections in Afghanistan.

Given this context, Canada's participation in the ground forces in Afghanistan is completely legitimate. We salute the arrival of a Canadian battalion in Afghanistan.

[*English*]

However a fundamental debate is taking place today in Canada regarding the dilemma that would be faced by Canadian soldiers acting under U.S. command. If Canadian soldiers capture Taliban or al-Qaeda fighters do they turn them over to the U.S. command regardless of the ensuing legal status of the captured fighters? That is the question we should be asking ourselves today.

A significant portion of world opinion, indeed a majority of world opinion, has expressed the opinion that the soldiers or fighters of the Taliban and al-Qaeda must be presumed prisoners of war unless judged to be criminals or non-prisoners of war. The presumption to start with is that they should be treated under the Geneva Convention as prisoners of war.

This has been expressed clearly by Mary Robinson, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights; several countries around the world, primarily European nations; and on our own soil by an eminent ex-colleague, Warren Allmand, chair of the International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development. Allmand recently made a statement that the prisoners have the right to be treated as and presumed prisoners of war until judged differently by a proper tribunal.

This morning we learned that secretary of state Colin Powell sent a memo to the president stating that Taliban and al-Qaeda fighters should be treated *prima facie* as prisoners of war until judged not to be.

Despite our strong revulsion at the slaughter on September 11 of thousands of innocent civilians, what must guide our conduct regardless of that revulsion is to assure ourselves we fully comply with international law and all the conventions we have ratified internationally.

No acts in modern history were more barbaric and vile than the holocaust, yet despite the horror and revulsion these acts caused around the world we granted the perpetrators, the Goerings, Streichers, Rudolf Hesses and others, full access to international justice before treating them as criminals under the law.

Is it fair and good to subject our troops to the uncertainty of a breach of international law by putting on them the onus of turning their prisoners over to the U.S. command without any guarantees or conditions as to the legality of how the United States intends to deal with the prisoners? It is neither fair nor good for us to impose this burden on our soldiers.

There are brilliant minds that deal with these questions. A way must be found within our government to turn over to the new Afghan government the prisoners the Canadian troops capture. I understand this is the case with other countries on the soil of Afghanistan. I understand the Europeans who are peacekeeping in Kabul are turning over Taliban or al-Qaeda prisoners without question to the new government of Afghanistan which we ourselves, Canada, shared in the creation of under UN auspices.

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• (2230)

Perhaps this is the way to do it. We do not have any detention facilities in Afghanistan but perhaps our troops could turn the soldiers over to the new government we ourselves had to create. I do not say this is the perfect solution. I do not know if it is the only practical solution. However solutions must be found other than simply turning the soldiers over to U.S. command without guarantees or conditions.

More than our sovereignty as a country is at stake. What is at stake above all is the sanctity of the values we hold dear as Canadians, the chief value being the rule of law we have instituted and we all respect.

It is in this constructive light that I suggest we look into the question to make sure we find a way other than the dilemma faced by our troops today.

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore, NDP): Madam Chairman, I want to say on behalf of the federal New Democratic Party how grateful we are to the hon. member for his recent speech regarding the concerns about what is going on in Afghanistan. It is extremely refreshing to hear such a learned gentleman speak so eloquently about the situation.

As he knows very well, during the gulf crisis in 1990 the Prime Minister who was then leader of the opposition said that prior to the deployment of any troops certain conditions must be met to meet the role of parliament: First, a debate in parliament must take place before the deployment of troops; second, there must be a vote in the House of Commons regarding the deployment of troops; and third, any deployment of our troops must be under UN auspices.

I will put a question to the hon. member for whom I have great respect. If the current Prime Minister said that in 1990 in regard to the gulf war, what changed in regard to the Afghanistan situation?

• (2235)

Mr. Clifford Lincoln: Madam Chairman, there has been ample debate here regarding the events of September 11. I have sensed that there has been a consensus all along for Canada to join in the worldwide operation in Afghanistan. We had ample opportunity before parliament prorogued to discuss the issue at length. There have been several debates in which most of us have taken part, so I do not sense that we were taken by surprise by the deployment of Canadian troops.

I do not know what happened in 1990 or whether there was a commitment made to vote, but I do not know of any parliament where we vote on these issues to decide whether or not to send troops. There are debates but I am quite satisfied to leave the issue to the executive to decide when troops are sent, so long as there is a consensus within the country and parliament that it is a legitimate operation.

I think there was a consensus here that Canada should take part. The only reservation I have is in the modus operandi of Canadian troops on the soil. As I expressed in my speech, before turning prisoners over to U.S. command we must assure ourselves there are watertight guarantees that international laws and treaties will be respected fully. If we have any doubt to that effect we should look for alternative ways of doing it.

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore, NDP): Madam Chairman, it gives me great pleasure to rise tonight in this take note debate. I wish to thank everyone for the opportunity to speak in this very crucial debate although I believe it is a couple of months too late.

First, I would like to say on behalf of the New Democratic Party, provincially and federally across the country, that we have always and will always support our military men and women in the various services, as well as their families back home. However, if we ask questions of the government about its deployment, it does not mean we are disloyal. If we ask questions about the who, what, when, where and why of what is going on in Afghanistan, for example, it does not mean we are disloyal. It just means we have questions.

Anyone who has been following the issue over the past few months will know that the government itself has been sending out conflicting information. We heard the Prime Minister of the country say that the troops in Edmonton would be sent over only in a humanitarian peacekeeping role. Now the minister of defence himself tonight in a take note debate said, when I asked the question “How were you going to get the troops over there in November when you were going to get them assembled right away”?, that there was a change in their deployment. The Minister of National Defence said there was a change in their deployment, which means he contradicts what the Prime Minister said their initial reaction would be to the Afghanistan situation.

We still have a question. This is a rapid deployment force from Edmonton. Seven hundred and fifty battle ready troops are ready to go wherever they are asked. My question is this: if they are a rapid deployment force, how will they get from Edmonton to Afghanistan in 48 hours? How will they do it? There is not a single word in answer from the government.

The reality is, and the government knows it, that we do not have the capability of getting them over there. We were going to say that maybe we should ask our allies to help us, but the first thing is, and it is very clear, that we were going to go over and serve under the British and UN command in Kabul. Something changed and now we are in Kandahar, so when we ask questions about that it does not mean we are disloyal.

The Prime Minister himself said that those who ask for additional funding for the military are merchants of the arms sector and the arms industry. I say again that the Standing Committee on Defence and Veterans Affairs, which I am proud to serve on, has nine Liberals on it. I certainly would not call those nine Liberals merchants of the arms industry. I would not call members of the Bloc, or of the NDP for that matter, merchants of the arms industry. All we are saying is that we recognize the reality that over the years the military has been underfunded and cut to the point where it cannot do its job properly.

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It is interesting to note that when we raise questions on the uniforms, on the fact that they have green camouflage uniforms, which are more for tree combat than rock to rock combat, we are told they are frivolous questions, yet the same minister sends over blankets of a sand colour to the JTF troops. Why would he send over blankets if he does not understand the fact that we raise in these questions? If he thinks the green uniforms are sufficient, why would he send over tan coloured blankets to cover them? Again, the Liberals contradict themselves.

Let me say one thing again in the House. In 1990, the then leader of the opposition, the current Prime Minister, said to Mr. Mulroney, who was prime minister, "Prior to you sending any troops over to the gulf war we want a debate in this House. We want a vote in this House". That is precisely what the Prime Minister of today said back in 1990 and that is exactly what the New Democrats have said, yet there is a complete reversal by the Liberals. It goes on and on.

• (2240)

One thing that is really outstanding when we talk about Colin Powell, as my colleague from Burnaby—Douglas and my leader from Halifax have done, is that he is not what one would call a New Democrat, and I certainly would not say that for a second, but there is one thing Colin Powell is and that is a career soldier and a well respected person when it comes to military matters. When Colin Powell says to his president that the people in detainment in Guantanamo Bay should be treated as prisoners of war, then I would assume that people such as the president and our defence minister should stand up, should not have to apologize for such comments and should take those comments under advisement.

It is incredible that our defence minister sounds like an apologist for the Americans and sounds exactly like Rumsfeld does in calling them detainees. I can assure members that if those were Canadian soldiers in that picture, shackled and bent down on their knees behind those barbed wire cages, there would be an outrage in this country from coast to coast to coast.

We should not just concentrate on what is going on with those prisoners of war in Guantanamo Bay. There is also another very serious issue that seems to be neglected in this type of debate. What about the civilians, the so-called casualties, the collateral damage happening in Afghanistan? We never hear about those people. We never hear about the women, the children and the elderly in Afghanistan who are suffering under the weight of this terrible conflict that is happening now.

I agree that we as a country should support any effort around the world to free people who are oppressed. I have said many times that my own family was rescued by the efforts of the Canadian military and by the decisions made in this parliament, in this room, to send troops over, young men and women, in order to free the people of Holland. I have always supported our troops and our party has always supported our troops and their families, but again, just because we ask questions of the defence minister and the government that will never ever make us disloyal to our troops and to their families. In fact, I had 11 conversations with military personnel on Saturday and Sunday of this week. If those people were able to speak freely, without fear of losing their jobs or their careers

in the military, they would tell a story that is completely different from what the minister of defence is saying.

A classic example is that of the Sea Kings. This is a government that cannot even focus on replacing those Sea Kings in a timely manner. The minister of defence said that the first replacement for those Sea Kings will be in 2005, but we know now that the tender process for the split procurement has been delayed by another six months. By the time that goes out in June or July of this year, it will be literally impossible for any company out there to bring in a helicopter under those conditions by 2005. We said this three years ago, we said it two years ago, we said it last year and I said it a few months ago.

If the ministers of defence and public works and the Prime Minister cannot handle such a simple thing as replacing old helicopters, how much faith does one think we in opposition have when the government sends our troops over in a situation that they flip-flop and turn around on every single time? The rules of engagement are not even defined yet. The government is sitting here and talking about getting those rules to the troops when they get there. That is absolutely unacceptable.

Certainly I am not in the situation of sending my spouse overseas, and I do know that the men and women of the Edmonton battalion are very anxious and very ready to go. In fact, they want to go. This is what they are trained to do and they will do Canada proud, but the reality is that their families back home should have a clear understanding that while the troops pay the ultimate liability it is up to parliament to pay the ultimate responsibility to them and ensure that they have all the equipment, all the tools and all the support they need to be safe.

In conclusion, I want to say on behalf of all of us in parliament, may God bless our troops and their families and bravo zula for a speedy return.

• (2245)

Mr. John O'Reilly (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Chairman, I always enjoy the member's comments. Although he has a problem being in the NDP where there is actually a motion on the books that Canada not even be part of NATO, let alone NORAD, I know that he gets beyond that and actually deals with some of the problems.

An hon. member: At least we don't live on our knees.

Mr. John O'Reilly: There was a little interruption over there, from some of the Robbie Burns people, but I want to draw the member's attention to an article in the Toronto *Star* of last Saturday. I am not a particularly big fan of the *Star* or any other newspaper, but I did work in that business for a while. There are two people quoted who are Sea King helicopter technicians. They tell us that their best moment as Sea King pilots came last year when they plucked eight people off a sinking tanker in a driving storm near Bermuda. The Sea Kings have completed 77 missions in Operation Apollo without incident. They have been retrofitted. They are safe to fly. No aircraft in the Canadian military flies without first going through an inspection.

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A simple single engine aircraft has to go through a period of inspection every time it is flown. Using 30 hours as the Sea King barometer, people say that somehow this is wrong. I have watched them service the Sea King. Some of the servicing includes cleaning, changing the oil and things that are done as normal basic aircraft maintenance.

Would the member admit that the Sea King is performing admirably, with 77 missions so far in Operation Apollo with not one incident?

I get a little tired of the opposition. We have the members coming in here from the Robbie Burns dinner. We have the member from Calgary, the fastest talking member in the House. Actually he has the same vocabulary as a gas-fired duck. He just keeps going, and give him a supplementary if he does not know what that means, but I want to get away from that and I want to get the member to talk specifically about the actual fable that he tends to perpetrate here about the Sea King. Is he not proud of the people who, as they say in the Toronto *Star*, are proud to keep Sea Kings flying? They know that \$50 million in maintenance went into these aircraft before they were sent over. They are capable aircraft. The president of the United States flies one back and forth from Camp David.

Why on God's earth do these people think that somehow they can denigrate the Canadian military by attacking the Sea King helicopter?

• (2250)

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Madam Chairman, the first thing I learned in politics was to never lead with one's chin. For the information of this member, I represent the Shearwater air base, the home base of the Sea Kings. There is not a person on that base, and 1,200 military men and women work there, who does not say that it is time to replace these old birds. Every single one of them says that.

An hon. member: And we are.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: In fact, a member here now says that we are going to replace them, but if we are, what is wrong with the old ones? Thirty hours of maintenance is required for every hour of flight time. Sure, there are no problems at all keeping them going. There is no question that men and women at Shearwater and around the world will do everything they can to ensure that the current Sea King is safe, but we have heard time and time again that they are going to be replaced any minute now. Now it is 2005. The minister has said repeatedly, on his word, that there will be Sea King replacements in 2005. We know, and the parliamentary secretary knows for sure, that it is not going to happen.

All we want from the government is a little honesty and a little truthfulness for the military men and women, for it to say once and for all when the Sea Kings are going to be replaced, to pick the date and let us go for it.

Mr. John Bryden (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Aldershot, Lib.): Madam Chairman, I do not think the debate was really about the quality of Canadian equipment.

I would like to ask the member opposite to react to a concern that I feel and that is that the Canadian troops have been sent to Kandahar, they will be taking prisoners and the prisoners will be turned over to the Americans. I wonder if he would give us a sense of his concerns

or lack of concerns, if he will, about the fact that these prisoners will be turned over to the Americans, who will put them on Guantanamo Bay, which is outside the reach of American law and the reach of international law. It is a military base.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Madam Chairman, this is another member of the Liberal Party whom I have great respect for when he asks a pertinent question. The reality is that the United States has said that these prisoners or detainees would have no legal standing.

I have heard the Minister of National Defence and United States Defence Minister Donald Rumsfeld say that we are fighting for our values. What type of values does North America have when we denigrate ourselves to what our opposition did in Afghanistan? We are lowering ourselves to their standards.

We fought in various conflicts around the world because of Canadian values. One member of the Liberal Party said that we never ever traded away our moral obligations.

Rudolph Hess and all the members of the Nazis did horrible atrocities to the Jews and many other people during World War II, yet they were accorded the rights of a prisoner of war and had a fair trial. No matter how bad these terrorists are, as the member for Lac-Saint-Louis said very clearly, the people of Guantanamo Bay deserve no less.

• (2255)

Mr. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Madam Chairman, I would like to add my thoughts to this special debate.

September 11, 2001 will be remembered as the day that permanently changed the way we used to regard life on this planet of ours. This was the day that cowards hidden under the cloak of terrorism changed our lives forever. Now almost five months later the tide has changed. Today we have asked the men and women of our armed forces to go to Afghanistan and help eradicate terrorism.

The people of this land have asked their government to join in the campaign to bring justice and peace in the world. All members of the House are proud of the role our armed forces will play in this conflict. It is not easy to see loved ones depart and go halfway around the world because their country asked them to defend the ideals and principles in unknown surroundings in strange lands. Our men and women of the armed forces are doing this willingly, knowing full well that this will keep the rest of us safe back here at home.

Gone are the days of looking after our borders and personal interests. The globe has become so small that it is incumbent upon every government in the world to join the fight against terrorism.

I have witnessed the difficulties that our armed forces will face having personally travelled in that part of the world. The south Asian subcontinent has its own geopolitical challenges. It is a part of the world which has been engaged in conflict for a long time.

The questions of Kashmir and Afghanistan have been in the minds of global politicians for decades. The Kashmir question has been lingering for over half a century and the Afghanistan problem has been occupying us for over 30 years. We thought the problem would go away. History has proven to us once again that we were absolutely wrong.

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Now we have an obligation as well as a duty to engage the problem in order to make sure that a permanent and lasting solution will be brought forth to that part of the world. Afghanistan needs and requires our assistance. The people of Afghanistan were used as well as abused by the Taliban. If they did not wear the proper clothing they were ostracized as well as beaten. If they dared look any different or even exercise their human rights it got them into major trouble.

Afghanistan has an interim government and it is trying to bring the country out of those difficult times. The presence of our troops in Afghanistan will assist the government to accomplish that goal.

However the people of Afghanistan not only want troops to be present in order to guarantee their personal safety. They also require assistance in areas of first aid, education, logistics, as well as monetary aid. Our government along with its global partners is committed to assisting the people of Afghanistan and guaranteeing to them their place on earth, a place where they can raise their children in peace, be able to provide for their families, and dare dream for a better tomorrow. I am proud of the Canadian commitment to this endeavour.

We must also make sure that another area in that same part of the world gets a fair hearing. I am talking about Kashmir. There is a conflict there that needs our attention. We must help India and Pakistan work together to achieve peace between their two countries. One way we in the western world can assist in bringing lasting peace to Kashmir is by being proactive and engaging in trade with that part of the world.

The basic needs of individuals are very simple. They must be able to provide food, shelter, safety, health, education, and a peaceful future for their families. In order for these to be accomplished there must be peace as well as the means to ensure that this peace will last.

• (2300)

Trade will assist the local population in looking after its own basic needs. A climate for trade between the two countries and exports of local goods will bring much needed funding in the region. The other basic necessities will fall into place sooner than later.

I commend the job of our armed forces, I wish them Godspeed and safe return to their home and families.

Mr. John Duncan (Vancouver Island North, Canadian Alliance): Madam Chairman, people who are members of the armed forces for the most part believe that they are joining a higher calling. They are prepared to put themselves in harm's way for their country. This is a higher calling and a higher service.

The message we could send to the international community is that we are prepared to support our people in the armed forces by providing them with all of their requirements to keep them out of harm's way and to have the ability and capability to do their job.

One thing that became abundantly clear in the last budget, which happened after September 11, was that all of the new money allocated to the Department of National Defence would be allocated for one exercise, that is, Operation Apollo in Afghanistan, and would virtually do nothing to address the real concerns of the armed forces in terms of rust out and lack of capability in many equipment areas.

How can the hon. member be satisfied that the government is paying more than lip service to the armed forces given the budget that we witnessed most recently?

Mr. Jim Karygiannis: Mr. Chairman, I thank my colleague across the way for his question. The members of the armed forces were asked to do a job. Their country asked them to go to Kandahar and be part of a mission. They have expressed their willingness to do that.

Government after government has found ways of cutting into military budgets. There is no exception to that rule because cuts are made into budgets in order to bring deficits under control to pay the debt. One of the areas that is likely hit is the military. That has to be examined. The military has to be brought up to date with modern day equipment. I am sure that this side of the House will endeavour to do its best to make sure that our military, as well as the men and women that are abroad facing the challenge, is given the best equipment.

I do want to say to the hon. member, as well as my colleagues across the way, that fearmongering the troops over there is not the way to go. Wishing them Godspeed and safe return home is what they need. That is foremost in all our minds. We would like to see our men and women come home because we have children, relatives and constituents who are in the armed forces. We want nothing else but their safe return.

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, PC/DR): Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the chance to participate in this take note debate.

When we think about all the discussion that has gone on here for several hours, as well as witnessing the events, not just in Canada or the United States but around the world since September 11, it is important to be able to put all this into perspective.

The member just finished his speech by saying that fearmongering about the troops does absolutely no good. Well, of course. I would think that there is not a member in the House who would think that fearmongering would gain us anything. That is hardly the point. He said that we should be wishing them Godspeed, and I say amen to that. Let us wish them Godspeed but it is almost in spite of the equipment that they have, the uniforms that they have and any sort of rules of engagement that they might or might not have. In spite of that, rather than because of it, we wish them Godspeed.

Nobody knows any better about some of the conditions they will be fighting in than these men and women themselves because many of them have been around and around on a tour of duty all over the world. I will talk about a few of those people in a couple of minutes.

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I would like to pay tribute to the people who are leaving, many of them from the super base in Edmonton, many of whom live in the actual constituency of Edmonton North and in the riding of Elk Island, which used to be part of the Beaver River constituency that I represented for two terms. These are real people who we bump into at the grocery store. These are real people who are leaving families, children, partners and lovers. How difficult that must be to know that one is cut out for this kind of work and to know that one may always be called upon to go into active service, not just with peacekeeping and doing some of the safe stuff but to be called upon in a time of war because of some senseless action of one, Osama bin Laden, who turned the lives of everyone upside down, not just those families who suffered in the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and in Pennsylvania.

We wonder how many of those families made it through Christmas. Many of those families have had new babies since September 11. These people are all parts of families and parts of relationships. I think that is where we need to bring this down to the ground level. These are not just some nameless, faceless people.

The official deployment name of course is the Third Battalion Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry Battle Group made up of the PPCLI and Lord Strathcona's Horse. These are not just people from Edmonton, though. There are approximately 750 people, many from Edmonton, some from Winnipeg and some from Shilo, Manitoba. What a beautiful base that is. I was out motorcycle riding there east of Brandon just a couple of summers ago. It is a magnificent part of the country. People who are stationed at Shilo really enjoy the time that they spend there by and large.

It is not just infantry that we are sending, but engineering support, medical support, communications and signals officers and military police. Some of the officers are coming from the Lord Strathcona Infantry and elsewhere, not just the Princess Patricia's. How important it is to notice that this is a blend of people who are coming together for one single cause. They are proud to be members of the Canadian military. They are happy to go. They are happy to serve. They are proud to be called upon. However that is not to say it is not without apprehension.

Many of our colleagues tonight on both sides of the House have expressed concern about the situation of uniforms and equipment. They want to know if there is a battle plan and if there are rules of engagement. There are all kinds of things where I am sure there is apprehension and not just to leave loved ones and families or to leave kids behind at school.

I am sure some of our military personnel are married couples, both of whom may be deployed. Imagine that. What do parents do with their kids if they are gone for two months, four months or six months? That is big time day care yet they are still ready to go. They are ready to get the call because they have trained for this and are ready for it.

These people are unbelievably committed to the cause. We need to thank them, be grateful and gracious to them and to wish them Godspeed, as the member said. Each and every one of us will do that. However that is not to neglect some of the shortcomings of funding, of long term planning, of a white paper that is virtually

yellow because it is so old and of a lack of funding for equipment and for strategic advice and communications.

I have to look at the number of real people who are going into battle. This will not be like travelling from Edmonton to Ottawa. This is a long flight. I am not even sure how they will get there because of the lift capability. However I see the tremendous sense of commitment.

● (2305)

I would like to quote from an article in today's Edmonton *Sun* about some real people. The headline reads in big letters "Troops ready to get in and get the job done". Does that not sound positive? Does that not sound encouraging? These are real people whom we can rely on to get the job done. In spite of some of the difficulties and shortcomings they have had and in spite of perhaps shortsighted funding cutbacks, they are ready to go in and get the job done. Seven hundred and fifty Edmonton soldiers are prepared to go to Afghanistan.

Let us look at Chris Atkinson a 34 year old warrant officer who commands 47 soldiers with one combat engineer regiment. He got orders on Friday to deploy to Afghanistan starting February 1. He is part of a battle group of 750 soldiers and a dozen Coyote reconnaissance vehicles. He got the call and is proud to go and rally the troops and say that we are in. He is going with apprehension but also with excitement.

It seems to be easier to be the one leaving because we are focused on whatever it is we are doing here in Ottawa. We get on the plane knowing that we are leaving people behind. We trust them with Godspeed as much as they trust it for us. With these people being excited, let us not forget about the people who are being left behind and who will be thinking of them and missing them dreadfully.

These engineers whom Chris Atkinson commands will build bunkers, erect fences and possibly clear mines in support of the Canadian infantry at the U.S. base in Kandahar. One can only imagine what kind of a job that will be.

Troops with the 3rd Battalion Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry and Lord Strathcona's Horse will make up most of the contingent. They were not allowed to participate in a broomball tournament this weekend because they will be actively involved in Afghanistan. Can members see the sense of celebration to live life the best way we can and the best way we know how?

It was 30 below in Edmonton on the weekend so they had an indoor broomball tournament. Just think of the memories they will have of that broomball tournament when they are hunkering down in Afghanistan. The guys who were actually going to be in the field were not allowed to participate in the broomball tournament because it would not be great to get sent overseas injured and not fit for service because of a broomball tournament.

Master Corporal Dave Burgess is another real person with a real name, a real family and real people who love him and will miss him. He is a communications specialist who expects to be based outside Afghanistan in a neighbouring country, such as Tajikistan or even Kuwait. He says that he is truly looking forward to this mission and that he cannot wait to get in and get it done. He was in Iran in 1988, the Golan Heights in 1996 and Bosnia in 1999. He knows the Middle East.

These are amazing people quoted in today's Edmonton *Sun*.

Someone whom I mentioned earlier when I was asking a question of the member for Saint John, warrant officer Mark Legge of the Strathconas, plans to take walks with his wife of 23 years. He wants to cherish those last few days because he knows the countdown is on.

All of us here certainly have not come back to anything as dreadful as they may be facing. However we knew we had to come to Ottawa for the spring session. We know the countdown is on. We want to enjoy those last walks, talks or whatever.

Mark wants to look at new camping gear this week such as solar panels for his 27 foot trailer. That does not sound defeatist. Guess what? He is planning on going camping again with his wife and family. That to me is the most optimistic attitude that any of these people could have. He said that hopefully they could go to the RV show Thursday night at the Agricom because they are avid campers.

These are the real people to whom we want to say thanks. We wish Godspeed to all who are going and to all of their families and loved ones.

• (2310)

Mr. John Bryden (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Aldershot, Lib.): Mr. Chairman, I feel helpless in this debate because in my eight years as a member of parliament never have I had occasion to speak in a debate that is as important as this debate.

I am frightened in the most real sense that one can be frightened as a politician, as a Canadian and as a member of the world. I am not frightened because the international terrorists will attack Ottawa or that biological terrorism will appear in Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto or wherever else, in the United States, in Mexico or the United Kingdom. I am frightened because I am afraid that the United States, the single most powerful nation in the world, might lose its commitments to the protection of our democratic values and, more important, our respect for the rule of law.

The issue that we have heard tonight is not about prisoners of war who might be taken by Canadians or by the Americans in Afghanistan and returned to Guantanamo Bay. That is not the issue at all. The problem is that Guantanamo Bay is not U.S. soil and those of us around the world, those in dictatorships and those in countries that have no respect for democratic values, understand precisely why one wants to keep prisoners in Guantanamo. It is because Guantanamo Bay is not U.S. territory.

Guantanamo Bay is leased land from Cuba and it is outside the reach of American law. It is outside the reach of any commitments the Americans have ever had to UN values pertaining to the treatment of prisoners of war or human rights.

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I am not one who would ever say that the Americans intend to abuse the prisoners who might be at Guantanamo Bay, but the message is clear to the world. If we choose to hold prisoners outside the reach of our democratic values, outside the reach of our constitution and our commitments to the values of the United Nations, the world will draw its own conclusions.

I wish to stress that as a Canadian I agree 100% that we have to be committed to the war against terrorism. We are faced with something that is unique in world history, although I am not quite sure that it is that unique, but nevertheless it is a situation where we have international terrorists who are prepared to commit suicide in order to make their point with violence.

It is obviously true that special measures must be employed. I am sympathetic with the Americans when they feel that this type of person cannot be accorded prisoner of war status because of course there would then be the problem of returning the person to society or, after the war is over, of freeing the person.

What we have with these terrorists, we have the same situation in this land of Canada where we have these people, who are psychopaths. We actually have provisions under the rules of parliament where these people, these psychopaths who we cannot be sure will not commit murder again and again, can be put away indefinitely. That provision is under the rule of law, under the laws of parliament. It is not under the laws of the military.

My difficulty is that Guantanamo Bay is under the law of the military. It is under the law of the general who controls Guantanamo Bay. It is under the law, the authority or the power of the president of the United States and not congress and not the courts.

• (2315)

I am terribly concerned and the message I would like to give to the Americans is that we Canadians are their brothers and that we would only send these messages to them if we were really truly, deeply concerned.

With the prospect that prisoners can be captured, taken and held outside the jurisdiction of the constitution, outside the jurisdiction of the courts in the United States, outside the jurisdiction of international law, we can never convince the dictatorships of the world today or the dictatorships of the world to come that these prisoners are not being abused.

I am one who has spent a lot of time studying military history. I know a lot about weapons. I know a lot about how war has been conducted in the past. I can tell you, Mr. Chairman, that there is nothing more frightening and nothing more dangerous than if the Americans, the most powerful nation in the world, show shall we say a weakness or a lack of resolve to uphold democratic values, to uphold human rights, to uphold the rule of law. That is far more dangerous, far more deadly than anything that the terrorists can do either in the United States, to Canada or anywhere in the world.

I hope the Americans will listen to their friends, the Canadians, and consider very carefully that what they do affects the entire world, all of us, in a way that could have the most profound negative consequences.

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• (2320)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Chairman, I welcome the opportunity to take part in this discussion which should have taken place as a full debate months ago. I direct my comments this evening beyond the Chamber and beyond this insensitive government that has consistently ignored the women and men who serve in our military. Tonight I speak directly to the tens of thousands of people who have loved ones fighting in our military, to the veterans of the nation and to the tens of thousands of people who have served in our military.

It will take the collective voice crying out to force the government to change course and to restore the pride that was once there. It is time the government started being truthful with the people of Canada about our lack of contribution to the ground war in Afghanistan.

Many questions remain unanswered by the government in regard to what exactly has been Canada's response since September 11. Canada is deploying 750 soldiers overseas when the public, which includes the families, friends and loved ones of the soldiers already deployed, is purposely kept in the dark about what is going on with the soldiers who are supposedly already in Afghanistan.

I am referring to joint task force 2, JTF2, Canada's specialized domestic hostage rescue unit. For months after September 11 the Minister of National Defence implied that JTF2 was operating in Afghanistan. I knew when I questioned the minister of defence on November 22 that JTF 2 was still in Canada. The government had gone through this elaborate exercise of misinformation to try to hide the fact that the war on the ground in Afghanistan had been taking place without Canada.

I hope it was in recognition that there was no role for a domestic hostage rescue unit in Afghanistan that the third battalion of the Princess Patricias were then offered. The truth of the matter is that because the third battalion of the PPCLI has been so depleted of manpower by federal government cutbacks other soldiers had to be seconded from different groups altogether across the country to make up the 750.

I am told by the families of the military personnel that because the soldiers had to be seconded from wherever they could be found some individuals were told Friday that they were leaving Monday. It was barely 48 hours' notice, hardly time to prepare themselves and their families for the departure.

Soldiers are stressed to the maximum now because they are overtasked. It is not fair to the families, to the spouses or to the children to be treated with such disregard. Families are at a breaking point and the minister of defence and his government refuse any compassion for these individuals who are just like us and deserve to be treated with respect.

They needed six months to be operationally ready, to train as a unit. Now that the Princess Patricias are ready to be deployed the war in Afghanistan is over. The Minister of National Defence and his government will clearly be at fault for any loss of life. It is morally unacceptable for any Canadian soldier to be sent into battle without the proper training, support and equipment. It appears that the government has not learned its lesson from World War II, the lesson of Dieppe.

The latest scandal involving the lack of proper uniforms for our women and men is no different from the ongoing scandal of the lack of proper equipment.

I was concerned that the minister of defence would offer the services of a domestic hostage rescue unit for an international conflict. Luckily U.S. General Tommy Francks, head of international war against terrorism in Afghanistan, understands the JTF2 better than the minister of defence and he made no request for the JTF2 overseas.

The minister of defence has been hiding behind the cloak of secrecy that surrounds the JTF2 to mask the fact that Canada was totally unprepared for September 11 and had nothing to offer. It is obvious why other members of the international coalition against terrorism like Great Britain and Australia were honest in telling their people about the role they were prepared to play on the ground in Afghanistan. They had something to tell.

It was not until I challenged the minister on November 22 in the House that JTF2 was still in Canada that the major political spin started to happen. When caught in a lie, tell the truth. Within days, now exposed, the Minister of National Defence called a press conference to admit to the Canadian public that Canada was making no contribution to the ground war in Afghanistan, preferring to send ships to fight the Taliban navy.

• (2325)

The myth continues. The war is over in Afghanistan. It is time to tell the Canadian public what the JTF2 is doing in Afghanistan.

Canadians can tune into CNN and watch the United States government tell the American people exactly what Delta Force, its elite commando unit, is doing in Afghanistan.

The so-called national security excuse just does not cut it any more. Why the secrecy, the cover up? Is it because Canadian soldiers under the command of foreign officers are being asked to do activities that would be considered illegal under Canada law, or is it because they never made it to the war?

Canadians have a right to expect honesty from the government. Canadians have a right to expect answers from the government because now more troops are being sent and the same unanswered questions remain. What are the rules of engagement? The minister of defence tells us that big decisions are being made in his office. It sounds like Vietnam all over again.

What happens if our soldiers are given an immediate task by a U. S. commander, the decision to fight? Would that commander have permission to call the shots on the ground, or is he supposed to call the Prime Minister to ask for permission to shoot if he has a gun pointed at his head?

The reality of the situation is that the commander on the ground has to have the authority to do whatever it takes to safeguard the men and women under his command.

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The Canadian public and parliament have a right to know what the rules of engagement are. What do our troops do with prisoners? Under an American commander do we hand them over to the Americans, or are we responsible for these prisoners of war? What about landmines? The United States and Great Britain never signed the landmines treaty.

Now the first thing that troops do when they set up camp is defend their position, and they do so by setting up a perimeter by laying landmines. Will Canadian forces be immune from prosecution when they break Canadian law by being involved in operations involving landmines?

The action of deploying Canadian troops behind landmines makes a mockery of the government's landmine crusade. It clearly demonstrates that while it is there for the photo op when the true test comes the government is spineless.

This would never have been a problem if the government had not moved without thinking and disbanded the Canadian airborne regiment. We could have been in Afghanistan under our own steam, under our own command. Instead Canadian soldiers are being used as an extension of foreign policy of a foreign nation.

I draw attention to the fact that during the Oka crisis an army chief of defence staff was put in place to oversee operations. The current chief of defence staff has an air force background. The vice-CDS has a navy background. We have navy and air force commanders making decisions on land operations.

It is time the federal government gives serious consideration to putting in place an army commander to be responsible for the ground war in Afghanistan. The government has not learned the lessons of September 11. The airborne regiment was disbanded and now we learn that the parachute companies are being disbanded altogether.

In fact it is known that the federal government has not changed its plans to invoke further cutbacks to our military. It plans to cut another brigade so that we are reduced to only two.

Just like the decline in the Canadian dollar, a weak military puts our very existence as a nation at risk. Canadians are becoming very aware that an independent Canada depends on a prepared military and that deployment of the Princess Patricias to Afghanistan has exposed us once again to the absolute failure of the government's defence policy.

In closing, I voice my utter disgust at the hypocrisy of the government. Our head of state saw fit to award General Lewis MacKenzie the Order of Canada and tonight in the Chamber the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence slagged and berated a man who put his life on the line for this country.

Those remarks punctuate the utter disdain of our arrogant counterparts across the way for our serving members of the armed forces and our veterans. Is this what it has come to? Does this arrogant government now feel it outranks the crown?

● (2330)

Mr. John Duncan (Vancouver Island North, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to take part in this take note debate on the Department of National Defence.

One might ask the question: What does this mean? Does it mean we are sending troops to Afghanistan? Is it about sending troops or is it about sending detainees to Guantanamo in Cuba? We have heard many members of the House spend a lot of time talking about sending detainees to Guantanamo. However the real issue is primarily about sending Canadian troops to Afghanistan.

My riding includes the military base in Comox which is sending troops to the Afghanistan front. Do those troops want lip service from this place? No, they do not. That is an absolute no.

What do they want? First, they want the opportunity to serve. All their training and all their instincts lead them to believe they want to serve. Is Afghanistan a proper cause? Of course it is. Will they represent Canada appropriately? Of course they will. Do they have frustrations? Of course they do. What is their frustration? It is primarily lip service, putting the lives of airmen and other personnel at unnecessary risk. Do they recognize that Canada has more limited resources than some of our allies? Of course they do, but they also realize that Canada has not placed a priority on their endeavours for quite some time.

Witness the Aurora for example. Our Aurora crews win international contests up against other NATO countries that have first class technology electronics on their aircraft. We are matching and beating that technology with our crews with the equivalent of technology from the Commodore 64 era. Anyone who is more than 40 years old will recognize that is very old technology indeed.

Basically, it is pathetic that a G-8 country, which we pretend to be, has difficulty sustaining 2,500 ground troops and four ships in the current Operation Apollo.

Are there any bright spots? Yes of course there are. One that I can specifically talk to is the Cormorant helicopters which have been purchased and put into the Canadian search and rescue program. These are on a first delivery basis. We now have Cormorants in Comox. These machines are dearly loved by the crews who are now beginning to get to know them and who are working very closely with EH Industries. Despite some reported wind screen and other minor problems, these are normal glitches that are resolved in a very good way working with the manufacturer.

This is no different than what happened with the Aurora and other aircraft when they first came on the scene. They loved them. I want to deliver that message very clearly because we have this ongoing difficulty with the Sea King replacement program.

● (2335)

There has been, I believe, an attempt to downgrade or downplay the appropriateness of the Cormorant helicopters to fit that role. I do not want to leave any impression that there is any dissatisfaction with the Cormorant helicopters in the search and rescue role as displayed to date at Comox and on the west coast. There is every indication that it is a most appropriate machine for that duty, and we should be heeding the message coming from Comox on that purchase.

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What are some of the frustrations of our armed forces personnel? Clearly the number one frustration right now is that the fall budget delivered in this place did not address the real concerns about rust-out in the military. The increase in spending that was dedicated to the Department of National Defence essentially will cover one thing and one thing only, that is, Operation Apollo, the Afghanistan commitment. To portray it as being anything different than that is colouring it because it simply is a fact that any increase in spending will go almost entirely to Operation Apollo.

Another great frustration is the lack of heavy lift capacity. Any time we pretend we are a combat ready, combat capable service, our ability to move is compromised by our lack of heavy lift capability. To gloss this over is very detrimental to our international status as an important and valuable ally. The real, political, diplomatic, trade and other costs associated with this status are far outweighed by the advantages which could accrue to Canada in international affairs, trade, humanitarian clout and other measures, yet still the government refuses to put priority where it belongs.

Service in the armed forces is a higher calling and a very special calling. Lip service simply is not good enough and the government needs to send a far different message, not only to our armed forces personnel but to the international community, particularly after September 11. Unfortunately the government has failed to do so.

The fact that Canada was asked only latterly, other than our JTF2 forces, to go to Afghanistan simply is symptomatic of the perception by our allies that we are not capable of immediate combat ready because of our lack of equipment. This is letting down our troops. This is a problem for Canada internationally. This affects Canada negatively in ways that cannot be described quantitatively, but we see these things clearly if we choose to look.

We have two legacies. The first is the legacy which we carried forward from the post-World War II period when Canada and the U.S. shared incredible synergies. William Stevenson, the quiet Canadian from Winnipeg, along with William Donovan were the creators of the office of strategic studies which became the forerunner of the CIA, a post-war operation that took our U.S. partner on a direct line from isolationism to making the difference in World War II and made the U.S. a very different nation after World War II. This is one proud legacy and one of the reasons why Canada had and continues to have to this day special access to defence sharing agreements with the U.S.

• (2340)

The second legacy we have is the soft power legacy of the Liberal party shepherded by Lloyd Axworthy that put precious little priority on Canadian armed forces as a combat capable and ready force, suitable primarily for peacekeeping and living in the shadows of our allies.

It is time for a re-evaluation of our priorities. Clothe the soldier was a priority. We spent \$350 million and we have not the ability to clothe our Afghanistan bound troops with desert camouflage. Something is wrong.

The quality of life is one area where the government did some right things, but what about combat readiness? There is much to do. Canada must be a master of its own fate. Sovereignty depends on

putting our fiscal house in order, secure borders and an armed force valued by our allies. I conclude with that remark.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Chairman, at around seven o'clock this evening the House commenced a take note debate on the deployment of Canadian troops to Afghanistan and all the attendant issues which have arisen as a result of that. I have found many of the speeches tonight very interesting, so much so that what I felt about some of the principal issues has been tempered somewhat and maybe changed to some extent. That is a testament to the importance of take note debates. I thank the government and the House for permitting the debate.

I want to address the issue of human rights. The Canadian government and the U.S. government have co-operated in NORAD for over 40 years. Some 280 Canadians are on U.S. soil in NORAD roles and as I understand it, there are about 50 Americans on Canadian soil who also participate. We have been able, through a co-operative arrangement, to discharge the responsibilities of NORAD in co-operation without a question of sovereignty.

The question of sovereignty has come up for an interesting reason. The attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon and the one failed attack, that is, the plane that went down, was a different situation totally. In the gulf war we participated in a coalition. We were there because there was a conflict elsewhere. This particular issue has been treated somewhat differently because the attack was directly on the United States of America. It was a very serious attack. It hurt very deeply. I saw that first hand when I travelled to Washington to speak to some of our elected counterparts about the consequences and about airline and airport safety and security issues.

We have all seen the news reports of the so-called illegal combatants, the so-called detainees who have been taken. We have seen the pictures. I do not have to describe them. They have been taken to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. It is interesting to note that Guantanamo Bay military base is leased from the Cuban government. It is a military base and it is not subject to Cuban law.

As I listened to the debate this evening I started to have questions in my mind. What would have happened if someone had survived one of those terrorist attacks in the U.S. and they were taken into custody? What would have been the treatment of those persons who were directly involved in the terrorist attacks on the U.S.? Because it was on U.S. soil, they would have been subject to U.S. law. The alleged crime was a crime covered by civil law and would be subject to civil law. There is a process. There is a protection of the rights of a terrorist to due process.

The issue really comes down to, is there a case we can think of where anyone who commits a heinous crime is not entitled to the protection of basic dignity and human rights and the protection of international law? Basic rights regardless; where is the line? I am speaking tonight because I cannot find the line where I would say something that somebody did was so bad that they were not entitled to any rights, that their rights should be different from those who are in other jurisdictions. I cannot find that line.

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• (2345)

What I can find are people who have committed crimes, are thought to have committed crimes, or at least are believed to belong to organizations which have promoted and abetted crimes. I have not seen anything that has stopped them from being human beings.

I wonder if the issue to be discussed is whether or not there is a line beyond which we can ignore basic human rights. I cannot find that line.

Under the Geneva convention the definition of a combatant basically is a military person who takes part in hostilities and distinguishes himself or herself from the civilian population. The criteria for this status includes being regular members of armed forces, members of a militia or volunteer forces operated under a command, someone wearing distinctive uniforms, carrying arms openly and abiding by the law of armed conflict when taking part in hostilities.

Civilians are not permitted to take part in hostilities. If they did they would be considered to be so-called unprivileged belligerents or unlawful combatants. Under the Geneva convention unlawful combatants are those persons who take direct part in hostilities but do not meet the law of armed conflict requirements of combat status.

I am not sure what status the detainees have. I am not sure whether they have any legal status. I am sure that they are not being treated as well as those who perpetrated the Holocaust. I am pretty sure they are not being treated as well as Clifford Olson. I am not sure that they are being treated as well as any other known criminal who has committed an offence within a jurisdiction subject to civil or international law.

We have found a spot in the world, Guantanamo Bay, where laws are made on the fly. There is a question about whether or not there is a line and whether or not parties who have been arrested, detained and alleged to be either members of a group or to have promoted or abetted in terrorism are being given proper treatment. Our concern is not simply for the specific case concerning Talibans or al-Qaeda members, but how in a civilized world we deal with situations where human rights become a fundamental issue and in fact come under question.

The Government of Canada should to the best of its ability take all steps to ensure that all detainees and prisoners taken by the Canadian forces are treated in accordance with international law and are offered no less treatment than they would at least be afforded under the Geneva convention.

• (2350)

Mr. Gurmant Grewal (Surrey Central, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Chairman, on behalf of the constituents of Surrey Central and along with my colleagues from the Canadian Alliance, I commend our brave men and women of the Canadian armed forces who have been representing our great nation in Afghanistan. These 750 soldiers have to rely on the United States for support. Over-reliance is embarrassing, particularly so because we are a G-8 country.

Despite the cost that has ballooned from \$187 million to \$350 million, Canadian forces personnel have been sent without adequate preparation. They do not have the proper equipment. They do not

even have proper uniforms. Our forces are already overstretched. The defence budget has been slashed and the budget crisis in the armed forces continues.

The force protection issue has been dismissed again, as it was during the Kosovo crisis. Landmines, transport capability and prisoners of war are among many other issues that remain unresolved. The rules of engagement are still being written. Serious questions surround Canada's commitment and the safety of our brave men and women.

Despite all that, this is only a take note debate. There is no vote. Parliament's role has been continuously diminishing under the watch of the arrogant Liberal government. Parliament has been reduced to barely a rubber stamp process.

This debate should have taken place before making the military commitment for Afghanistan. There should have been a vote on the issue. Parliament should have been given full information before a decision was made. Even today we got very little information, not enough for members of parliament to make any appropriate decisions.

During the few minutes I have, I will address the issue from a different perspective. I watched other members make their presentations with interest. I will be looking at it from a different point of view.

What do we want to accomplish by sending the military to the region? What else could have been done to complement the role of the military to win the war against terrorism?

Our Canadian forces personnel are in Afghanistan because of the fight against terrorism. It is a peacemaking issue and later on it will become a peacekeeping issue. The terrorism issue is not a religious issue or anything like that. Simply, the war against terrorism is a war against terror.

The approach in the fight against terrorism is multifaceted. Sharing intelligence and applying a diplomatic approach are important components.

Once upon a time, Canada was the envy of the world when it came to peacekeeping and preventive diplomacy but this is no longer the case. The Liberals are struggling to keep up with world events. The Liberals have let Canada's diplomatic reputation slip within the international arena. It is shameful.

The government's laissez-faire approach to foreign affairs is truly shameful. Its complete lack of vision comes from the fact that it responds only to events and not to issues. There is a lack of co-ordination in various departments, in the approach to the military as well as the foreign policy agenda.

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• (2355)

How long will our armed forces continue to stay in Afghanistan? What will happen after we withdraw our military, whenever that is? What will be the role of the neighbouring countries in whose backyard all this is happening, particularly nuclear powers like India, Pakistan and other countries? What will be the role of countries like Iran, China, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan in maintaining peace in the region? One day the Americans will wind up and abandon the region again.

The situation is compounded by the other scenario developing in the region. The situation in the Asia Pacific region is very tense at the moment. It is a serious threat to international peace and the campaign against terrorism.

The Canadian government lost an opportunity to play a significant role in preventive diplomacy. It is a time to prevent conflict rather than spend more money and resources later on damage control. Tony Blair, George Bush, Colin Powell and Shimon Peres have all made visits to the strategically vital region to avert an all out war between nuclear powers. The international community is very concerned with the military buildup and tension at the border between Indian and Pakistan which is just next door to Afghanistan.

The Liberals have a too little, too late approach to helping find diplomatic solutions in conflict resolutions. The Deputy Prime Minister went there too late just to save face. He missed the opportunity. He went there like a fire truck going after the fire is out.

The international community must move beyond Afghanistan to flush out pockets of terrorism wherever they are. Terrorists should not be allowed to play hide and seek. This brings attention to Kashmir where terror is currently brewing. It may be a favourite spot for dislodged terrorists from Afghanistan.

The resolution of the contentious issue of Kashmir through sincere dialogue is long overdue. It can be made part of the solution and not the problem in the sustained campaign to stamp out global terrorism. A solution oriented new perspective to this old issue is within grasp with world leaders working to facilitate restoring peace in the region.

On December 13 there was a terrorist attack on the Indian parliament, the seat of the world's largest democracy. It was a reminder that terrorism is not only a threat to western democracies but rather an international phenomenon. The solution to the problem can be found by concerted international effort directed at exterminating terrorism.

Terrorism is the biggest threat facing the global village in the current century. There cannot be a double standard to deal with terrorism. World leaders have ignored the Kashmir dispute for too long, as they have ignored the Israel Palestinian conflict. Preventive diplomacy is needed to bring both nuclear powers to the table, find a common ground to end their dispute, and restore peace in the whole region. Let us look at the bigger picture. It is bigger than Afghanistan.

A synergy of resources should be created and applied internationally to deal not only with terrorism but with organized crime. Let us not forget that terrorism and organized crime go hand in hand and complement each other. It is sad that our weak Liberal

government has let Canada's reputation slip down in the international arena of diplomacy and in the quality of our military commitment to peacemaking and peacekeeping.

May God bless our troops. May they return home safely and soon.

• (0000)

Mr. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Chairman, I have been listening to this take note debate and thought that I would address my remarks to the reconstruction of Afghanistan as a priority on the international agenda and to the protection of human rights as a central concern in that reconstruction effort. After decades of civil war, brutality, devastation and deprivation the people of Afghanistan deserve no less.

The words of United Nations General Assembly resolution 220, bear recall: "Only a political settlement aimed at the establishment of a broad based, gender sensitive, multiethnic and fully representative government which respects the human rights of all Afghans, the international obligations of Afghanistan and is committed to peace with its neighbours can lead to a durable peace and reconciliation".

May I outline the 10 principles that must underpin this reconstruction effort in which Canada participates, organized around the centrality of rights protection.

The first is the establishment of a viable justice system. In a word what is required is funding and technical assistance for the rebuilding of Afghanistan's legal and judicial system, including reform of the rural legal system; construction of new courts, prisons and jails; the drafting of a new constitution; the recruitment of women Afghan judges and lawyers from within the country; and the retraining and recruiting of new jurors, prosecutors, defence attorneys, police officers and court personnel.

The second is support for the establishment of a domestic human rights commission provided for in the Bonn agreement which can play a crucial role in monitoring, education and training of Afghan law enforcement, judicial and security officials.

The third is assistance with reconstruction programs aimed at reintegrating Afghan refugees and those displaced by the war, with special attention to the needs of women and the disabled. No repatriation program should begin without mechanisms in place to identify those who are unwilling or unable to go home and who continue to need international protection. Human rights monitoring during the post-return phase is also critical to ensuring that return is sustainable and safe.

The fourth is strong backing for the fundamental role of women in the country's reconstruction, including assistance with educational, employment and health programs for Afghan girls and women while affirming international support for the full participation of women in the political process and reform of the Afghan legal system.

The fifth is assistance in the clearing of landmines and unexploded ordnance that threaten to maim and kill Afghan civilians. The international community should make an emergency commitment of funds and technical assistance for mine clearance, public awareness programs and new training programs for clearance personnel including how to deal with cluster bombs.

The sixth is accountability for past abuses. In the words of general assembly resolution 220 again:

The accountability of perpetrators of grave human rights violations is a key factor in ensuring reconciliation and stability whether that accountability be secured by an ad hoc international tribunal, the application of the principle of universal jurisdiction, or through a domestic human rights commission as envisaged by the Bonn agreement.

Seventh, persons responsible for the most serious abuses of human rights and humanitarian law must not be included in the new government. Though many potential Afghan leaders may not have clean hands, at the very least those implicated in crimes against humanity, war crimes and other crimes of universal jurisdiction should be excluded. Experience has shown that past abusers who return to power often become repeat abusers.

Eighth, there should be no amnesty from prosecution for persons who have committed grave violations of international humanitarian law or crimes against humanity. Amnesty agreements often seem expedient in peace building, but more often they undermine progress by giving victims the sense that their grievances do not matter and leaders the sense that they can get away with further acts of violence.

Ninth, the establishment of a broad based government for Afghanistan must include commitments to uphold Afghanistan's obligations as a party to international human rights treaties and the principles of humanitarian law. These should include guarantees of non-discrimination against ethnic and religious minorities, particularly ethnic Hazaras and other Shia Muslims as well as groups that may form minorities within specific regions such as ethnic Pashtuns in northern Afghanistan.

Tenth, every effort should be made to disarm persons who have been implicated in violations of human rights and international humanitarian law and to exclude them from Afghanistan's new armed forces and civilian police.

In closing I make reference to the matter of Guantanamo Bay detainees and prisoners of war. The United States is a party to the Geneva conventions, those laws governing the treatment and protection of persons in armed conflict.

• (0005)

Accordingly every captured fighter is entitled to humane treatment, understood at a minimum to include basic shelter, clothing, food and medical attention. In addition, no detainee even if suspected of war crimes may be subjected to torture, corporal punishment or humiliating or degrading treatment. If they are tried for crimes the trials must satisfy certain basic fair trial guarantees.

Prisoners of war are entitled to further protections commensurate with respect for their military status as soldiers. Admittedly not all the detainees in Cuba are considered POWs. Under the Geneva conventions captured fighters are POWs if they are members of an

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adversary state's armed forces or part of an identifiable militia group that abides by the laws of war.

Accordingly most members of al-Qaeda, wearing no insignia and not abiding by the laws of war, would not qualify as prisoners of war. However Taliban soldiers whether Afghan or foreign comprise the armed forces of Afghanistan and should be entitled to POW status.

If there is doubt about anyone's status as a prisoner of war the Geneva conventions require he be treated as such until a competent tribunal determines otherwise. At present no tribunals have made such determinations. In a word, the struggle against terrorism must also conform to the norms of international human rights and humanitarian law.

Mr. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Chairman, I commend my colleague from Mount Royal and tell him how proud I am to be on the same team with him. This is a very difficult time in our history. Some people have said that this will be the most important issue parliament will deal with in many years. It is a great feeling to have someone on our team with so much international knowledge, knowledge of human rights, and so much sense of fairness and the foundation that underpins us. We are fortunate to have him in this parliament to help all of us make sure we make the right decisions at this time.

I wish to make one point and it is to emphasize the concerns related to some of the prisoners who have been taken. I rise solely because some of my constituents have brought this forward to me. It has been on the news quite a bit and I am sure there are more Yukoners who are also concerned that this be done properly according to international convention.

As far as the present treatment of the people in custody goes we can be assured they are being treated well. The British have been in, the Red Cross have been in, and this is under much international press. The treatment itself is not a big worry at this time. That might put to rest the concerns that my constituents brought to me.

There are other things that should be under consideration. Are there any prisoners in Canadian custody? We do not need to worry about that because any individuals taken into custody by the Canadian forces would receive a standard of treatment that meets or exceeds that required under international law including the third Geneva convention relative to the treatment of prisoners of war.

Are any prisoners being transferred? Again, during transfers, Canadians do not have to worry. The Government of Canada would ensure that prisoners could be transferred. It is a standard procedure in many international coalitions. If Canada is allowed to transfer to other national authorities it would have to meet all the legal operations of transferring requirements.

The item that people should be concerned about is the legal status of those prisoners who have been captured and how their rights have been determined. The Government of Canada is currently seeking clarification on the issues regarding the status of the determination of detainees. It is important that it is doing this and I am glad it is, both for myself and for my constituents who are concerned. I urge the government to do it forthwith because it is exceptionally important.

Government Orders

The status of these people has a tremendous effect. If they are prisoners of war they will receive all the rights accorded to them that were just outlined by my colleague from Mount Royal. If they are not, they do not have those rights. Over the years horrendous things have happened to people who have not been accorded that status to the extent that some could be executed through military trial.

Some may ask why we are looking at the rights of people who could have been involved in some of the most horrendous crimes in this century, crimes that led to the murder of Canadians, Canadian families and parts of Canadian families in the World Trade Center. There are other people there who may not have been involved and there is a possibility that there are people there who are totally innocent because that has not been determined and that is the issue.

The issue is that when people are captured in these situations they have the right to a fair hearing as to whether they fall into that category of prisoner of war or whether they do not. As was referred to earlier, article 5 of the Geneva convention states:

Should any doubt arise as to whether persons having committed a belligerent act and having fallen into the hands of the enemy belonged to any of the categories enumerated in article 4, such persons shall enjoy the protection of the present convention until such time as their status has been determined by a competent tribunal.

● (0010)

That has not occurred yet. That is why we are determining the status and urging the United States to make sure that each person has the right to a fair hearing by a tribunal or other process to see which category the individual falls into and which rights are available to that individual.

This is the law and that is why it is important. Canada abides by and subscribes to international conventions. We have to make sure that it is enforced and that we fall under it. The foundation of our society is that we live under the rules and the laws to which we have agreed.

It is especially important in this situation because it gives the moral authority to our troops. Imagine Canadian soldiers going out

to do something that philosophers would probably say is unnatural and which under normal circumstances would be considered assault or murder. They are going into an act of war and under the rule of law they are going to protect Canadian citizens and their families under very prescribed conditions.

We have read stories of soldiers who have come back from war. Imagine how psychologically devastating that can be. Imagine how devastating it would be if they did not have the rule of law behind them.

Let us look ahead and think of another conflict that could happen in the future. Perhaps our loved ones or someone in our family have signed up for the Canadian military. They are captured somewhere in the world by a dictator similar to Hitler but there is no determination if they are an international prisoner of war.

Would we want them not to have a right to a hearing? Would we want them to be put into the other category with all sorts of uncontrolled treatment and have them return unimaginable and totally different from what they were when they left or perhaps not return at all?

It is very good and important that the Canadian government has agreed to seek clarification on the issues surrounding the determination for these detainees. I urge the government to do this as quickly as possible. It is absolutely essential. It is the foundation of our precious just society when we are in peacetime and it is the moral authority for our heroes who go to war to protect our families and children.

● (0015)

[*Translation*]

The Chairman: As no other member wishes to speak, pursuant to Standing Order 53, the House will adjourn and I will leave the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 12.17 a.m.)

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