



CANADA

House of Commons Debates

VOLUME 137 • NUMBER 151 • 1st SESSION • 37th PARLIAMENT

OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, February 28, 2002

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, February 28, 2002

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES (B), 2001-2002

A message from Her Excellency the Governor General transmitting Supplementary Estimates (B) of the sums required for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2002, was presented by the hon. President of the Treasury Board and read by the Speaker to the House.

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MAIN ESTIMATES, 2002-2003

A message from Her Excellency the Governor General transmitting Estimates for the sums required for the service of Canada for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2003, was presented by the hon. President of the Treasury Board and read by the Speaker to the House.

* * *

• (1000)

[*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 one petition.

* * *

• (1010)

PETITIONS

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Jerry Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present this morning.

The first petition requests parliament to resolve the issue of residential school litigation outside the court system, specifically for the federal government to assume the responsibility for the Mohawk Institute lawsuit thereby recognizing that the Anglican Diocese of Huron was never a party to the operation of that residential school.

REPRODUCTIVE TECHNOLOGIES

Mr. Jerry Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition requests parliament to ban human embryo research and to direct the Canadian Institutes for Health Research to support and fund only promising ethical research that does not involve the destruction of human life.

IMMIGRATION

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, PC/DR): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 I am pleased to rise and present a petition to the House of Commons regarding professional skilled immigrations, specifically Mr. and Mrs. Premakumaran from Edmonton. They have rights according to the charter.

Several constituents in Edmonton who are very concerned about the fact that Nesa and Prem, as they are known, are a couple who were misled by immigration, via the Canadian High Commission, into believing that their education, skills and experience would be recognized in Canada and that they would readily acquire decent jobs within their field. These are both professional people and there are constituents who are very concerned about that.

Seemingly, the government welcomes these people into the country and yet this couple has had a great deal of difficulty.

The petitioners call upon parliament to request that their plight be looked into very seriously; for the government to change the misleading point system for immigrants; to look into the false advertising that induced such immigrants as this couple to come to Canada; clear present labour standards and resources; make sure there are sufficient jobs available before bringing more skilled labour into Canada; to pass a legal precedent with regard to professional skilled immigrants that avoids unnecessary misrepresentation; and finally, to adopt a new position on globalization where a uniformed standard system with regard to recognition of qualifications, skills and experience can be accepted nationwide.

Nesa and Prem are in a difficult position and the petitioners beg parliament to do something about it.

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Mr. Jim Gouk (Kootenay—Boundary—Okanagan, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, petitioners from my riding express concern about the exclusion that was made in the case of John Robin Sharpe, dealing with child pornography, particularly the number one self-created expressive materials.

Supply

The petitioners feel that this fails to uphold the rights of children to autonomy and dignity as guaranteed in the charter of rights and they therefore request that parliament reinstate section 163.1(4) of the criminal code.

* * *

[Translation]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Geoff Regan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1015)

[English]

SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY—BUDGETARY POLICY

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP) moved:

That, in response to Canadians' desire to save Canada as a sovereign nation and strengthen our distinctive contribution in the world, this House calls upon the government to reflect in its budgetary policy the New Democratic Party 12-Point Plan to Save Canada.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased on the NDP opposition day to introduce the motion which you have just read. As you were reading the motion my colleague sitting next to me, the NDP House leader and member for Winnipeg—Transcona, said some things are worth doing. What he was responding to was the motion which simply puts forward the proposition that Canada is worth saving and that as parliamentarians we need to get on with seriously addressing that question.

Today we are putting forward this motion in recognition of what we believe is a growing sentiment of Canadians: they desire to save Canada, they care passionately about the future of Canada as a sovereign nation and they want to see us strengthen our distinctive contribution in the world as well.

I intend to set out a 12 point plan that the NDP proposes which we would like to put on the table for debate. Not just debate here this morning within the Chamber but debate among Canadians about how we will reinforce Canada as a sovereign nation. I will outline what are some of the ways to do that.

The NDP does not pretend that it has the only program. We want to challenge members of the House and Canadians from coast to coast to take up the project that ought to engage the passions, energies and attention of us all.

Before I outline the NDP proposal I want to say a few words about why my caucus chose today to devote our opposition day business to this topic. Over the last couple of weeks we saw an incredible outpouring by Canadians of what would be described by anyone looking on as a passionate display of enthusiasm and love for the

country. Some will say that was just because Canadians love sports and were cheering our Olympic athletes to do their best.

It is true that Canadians love sports. Some may say they particularly love hockey, which is known as our national sport. When we won both the men's and women's world Olympic championships there was a lot of cheering and flag waving.

What we saw from Canadians over the last couple of weeks was something far more profound than that and far deeper than that. It was not just about nationalistic fervour in support of our Olympic athletes.

It unleashed in Canadians something they have been wanting to have reason to do for a very long time. They wanted to cheer not just for Canada's successes in the Olympics but for the Canada they love, a Canada that truly stands for something and has a unique contribution to make to the world. It is a set of values that they care deeply for and passionately want us to preserve. They want us to get on with building Canada based on those values.

[Translation]

I believe that the celebrations of the last couple of weeks in every village, town and community, whether anglophone, francophone or allophone, were very important, very special and very deep-seated. As parliamentarians, we must build and rebuild our commitment in order to reinforce special values and the Canadian sovereignty for the future.

[English]

That brings me briefly to the second reason why we chose to introduce this motion today and to launch a debate on what we need to do to save this country that we love so dearly.

Two weeks ago there was an op-ed article in the Toronto *Star* submitted by a new Canadian, someone who chose to come to this country, by the name of Charles Pascal. I would suggest that all members, in fact, I would like to see all Canadians read that article of February 5 because it puts a very important challenge to all of us. Mr. Pascal said:

I have been a proud Canadian citizen for well over half my years, but that pride of late is giving way to frustration. When I jumped over the 49th parallel to sign up to be part of this great experiment called Canada, I couldn't believe there was a country so committed to ensuring a balance between individual and community, between nation and enterprise.

But now, thirty years later, I am asking myself, why should we save Canada? It is hard to find one Canadian political leader who is asking, and answering, this query. The Canada I signed up for, the Canada that informs our nice press clippings around the world, is dying on the vine.

From where I sit, there seems to be too much political management and not enough leadership. I think it's time to put our leaders to the test regarding the Canada they say they want and how they plan to get there from here.

The Canada I fell in love with was one where an active respect for diversity trumped the more passive concept of tolerance, where what we owed each other as neighbours was expressed by our investment in universal health care and public education. I chose a place where peacekeeping was valued as a strong and significant role to play in the world. And of course I chose a Canada with Quebec as a key feature of the Canadian experiment.

Supply

•(1020)

When I first read the article I had a bit of a defensive reaction as did my New Democrat colleagues. We asked how this commentator, observer of Canadian political events, could say that no political leader or no political party was addressing the questions?

I quickly parked that defensive response. It is a challenge that each and every one of us in the House of Commons, all 301 members, must take seriously. Canadians want us to address the question of how to make Canada a better place, how to reinforce Canada's special contribution to the world each and every day, in each and every piece of legislation we pass and in each and every budgetary decision we make. That is the point of our motion today.

I challenge all members to address the questions that have been set out in that very provocative article. That is not the only person asking these questions. The questions that have been put to us, that we must take seriously, are in a way both brutal and unsettling. I can only assume they were meant to be brutal and unsettling.

I hope that in response to our putting that challenge to all members, particularly government members, there will not be the sound of a shrug from 168 shoulders from the government benches opposite.

We all know that on September 11 the horrible terrorist atrocities that occurred in the United States shook the world. They certainly shook Canadians. In addressing the question of Canada's role in the world and our commitments to ourselves as well as people around the world we have failed to respond to the true call for leadership. We have reacted, we made it clear that we abhor terrorism, and yes the Canadian government leaped to respond to become part of a military offensive in Afghanistan.

However, as the events unfolded and the government made decision after decision, building on a record of far too many years of decisions that eroded the very sense of what Canada is all about, Canadians have slowly begun to say we could and must do better than this. This is why we have a federal government.

Canadians have moved from a sense of frustration and disappointment. In talking with people there is a strong sense of exasperation. They ask: what good is government anyway if it is so systematically eroding the things that we as Canadians care about?

That is not the whole story. I took the article from the Toronto *Star* and sent it to a number of people. I asked them what they thought after I outlined the 12 point program which is our response to the question of why save Canada and how we can do it.

I will share a small number of excerpts from some of the responses to the question from people and also some of the commentary in the public domain where people are genuinely and earnestly trying to address the question.

•(1025)

[*Translation*]

I will briefly address our program, the program put forward by the NDP to improve Canada, reinforce our values, our place and our position in the world.

[*English*]

First and foremost, enhance Canada's environment, including a national implementation plan for reducing greenhouse gases, and before the end of 2002 ratify the Kyoto accord. If we cannot protect our environment, then there is no future, and that is not hysteria. That is a fact.

Second, strengthen the role of aboriginal, Metis and Inuit people in the Canadian family. Let us never forget that the first people, the first nations of this country, continue to occupy a second and third class status in the Canadian family. If we are not up to the challenge of tackling that problem, then we do not deserve to exist as a parliament.

Third, reaffirm Canada's international peacekeeping role and rehabilitate Canada's reputation as respected internationalists. The government has squandered away that reputation, but it is not the reputation that we are concerned about so much as the fact that we are neutering ourselves, we are eroding our very credibility as a true internationalist in a world that cries out for international co-operation and international solutions.

[*Translation*]

Fourth, the federal government must be again an equal financial participant in public and non-profit services in the areas of health and post-secondary education.

[*English*]

We have built something very precious in the country and it is under severe strain. It is a system of public services, health and education foremost among them, which held in them the promise of what it truly meant to be a Canadian. No matter where we lived, no matter what our financial circumstances we could depend upon these vital services. They have been a critical part of the Canadian dream and the Canadian reality that has been slipping away because of government decisions.

[*Translation*]

Fifth, we must develop a comprehensive strategy to eradicate child poverty.

[*English*]

It is a national disgrace of monumental proportions. The government came to power on a promise to eliminate child poverty. Every member of parliament stood in their place and voted to eradicate child poverty by the year 2000. I will not dwell on the disgraceful record of the failure of the government to seize this challenge. However let me remind all members that poverty during this period has remained at 18% among children. Let us compare this to Sweden, as an example. When parliament voted in 1989 to eradicate child poverty, Sweden's child poverty was 19%. Today it is at 2%. Why? Because its government understood that it was the programs, the services and the economic and social policies it adopted that were the means of eradicating child poverty.

Supply

● (1030)

[*Translation*]

Sixth, we must make sure that all commercial agreements provide protection mechanism for labour standards, human rights and the environment.

[*English*]

I am very briefly going to summarize the remaining elements of our 12 point program.

Seventh, enable primary producers and Canadian farm families to compete with foreign subsidies and reject continental energy and water policies that endanger Canadian control over our natural resources.

Eighth, strengthen Canadian communities, large and small by reversing the deterioration of our municipalities with stable funding and strategic infrastructure investments.

Ninth, celebrate immigration as a cornerstone of Canada, restoring respect for diversity and humanity in our immigration practices.

Tenth, reaffirm fair taxes, sound monetary policy and full employment as critical tools for accomplishing our collective economic and—

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): We have a fire alarm. The House is suspended to the call of the Chair.

(The sitting of the House suspended at 10.32 p.m.)

SITTING RESUMED

The House resumed at 11.05 a.m.

● (1105)

ALLOTTED DAY—BUDGETARY POLICY

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): When the House was suspended the hon. leader of the New Democratic Party had four minutes left in her speech.

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will resume almost in mid-sentence to outline the 11th point in our 12 point NDP program for saving Canada and reinforcing our sovereignty.

[*Translation*]

Eleven, strengthen the pluralist and democratic speech by limiting corporate concentration in the media and by supporting arts, amateur sport and culture.

Twelve, strengthen the Canadian democracy through a reform of the parliamentary institutions and of the election process that would include proportional representation.

[*English*]

Today the NDP has called for a debate on the whole question of why and how to save Canada. However let me also say that we are inviting every Canadian who cares about this to enter the debate by logging on to the NDP website at www.NDP.ca to contribute their

ideas, solutions and policies because the government and the country need all the help we can get.

Last night I attended a wonderful event on Parliament Hill, the celebration of the Canadian Muslim and Canadian Arab community, which holds out the dream of what Canada can be perhaps more brilliantly these days than anyone because they are a community under attack.

Respected journalist Haroon Siddiqui shared some very wise advice when he pleaded for parliamentarians to understand that criticism of American foreign policy ought not to be confused with anti-Americanism. I think that is the same sentiment we heard from the former foreign affairs minister, Lloyd Axworthy. He said that we were on a slippery slope speeding toward integration with the U.S. and that we needed a full scale debate on whether this was the future Canadians want.

If integration is what Canadians want most, then we had better get it over with quickly and decisively. However, if most Canadians would prefer to be Canadian, then we had better decide, in the post September 11 environment we now find ourselves in, what it means to be Canadian.

I hope Canadians, as they tackle the challenge of this subject, will take inspiration, as I have from the many messages that are being shared with Canadians. Let me just finish with one very brief such message from a distinguished author and filmmaker by the name of Munroe Scott who said the following:

The key thing is that the success of the Canadian experiment is of great importance not just to ourselves but to others. Strangely enough, those most likely to benefit directly from our success are the people of the USA. They, even more than ourselves, are in the grip of a corporate-driven materialistic ideology that exploits, and can ultimately destroy, both humans and the environment.

He went on to say:

At the moment the world is trapped between Eastern religious fanaticism as personalized by Osama bin Laden and Western economic fanaticism as personalized by George W. Bush. It is in the Canadian laboratory that we can prove that neither one is viable and there are alternatives.

That is our challenge. I believe Canadians are up to the challenge. I believe Canadians want their elected members, all 301 of us, to rise to that challenge. If we are incapable of doing that, not only have we failed in our responsibilities as politicians but we have failed our children and future generations who will be deprived of a Canada that they can love as deeply as we do.

● (1110)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Paul DeVillers (Secretary of State (Amateur Sport), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to inform you that I will split my time with the hon. member for Hillsborough.

I am very pleased to take part in this debate. I realize that it is the role of opposition parties to oppose the government's measures and policies, but I am really disappointed when motions such as the one before us today talk about saving Canada, because it implies that our country is in danger and that we have much greater problems than is actually the case. This type of motion is exaggerated and has more to do with the credibility of opposition parties than with the values that they seek to promote.

We believe, based on international surveys and studies, that Canada is among the top countries when it comes to living standards and conditions. We are truly proud of our country. It is sad to present motions suggesting that Canada is not what it should be.

This being said, I want to discuss the 11th point of the NDP plan. Throughout the day, my colleagues will deal more specifically with the other points.

[English]

In reference to point 11 on arts, culture and sports, we only have to go back to the announcement made on May 2, 2001 by the Prime Minister and the Minister of Canadian Heritage of a new program, tomorrow starts today, where the Government of Canada would be investing in arts and culture. It was the largest investment made in 50 years. Also, the government will be investing more than half a billion dollars over the next three years. That speaks to the dedication and the value that the government puts on arts and culture.

[Translation]

The NDP leader began her speech by talking about the Olympic Games. The games are over, but we saw that Canadians were very proud of their athletes. In larger as in smaller urban centres, people took to the streets to celebrate after the last hockey game, on Sunday. That is not the reaction of a country that feels a need to be saved. Rather, this was a reaction triggered by the pride felt by Canadians, who are very proud of their country and of their athletes.

[English]

We went through these Olympic games with the Canadian team winning 17 medals, the best Olympic results in the history of Canada. The victories in women's and men's hockey proved that Canada remains the leader in hockey and that is what Canadians were celebrating out in the streets.

These Olympic games demonstrated the power of sport in inspiring and uniting our country and our celebration of our country. We celebrated not only our athletes' results but also their strength of character, their poise and the grace and dignity they displayed regardless of the outcome of their competitions. Just like in the arts, extraordinary sport performances can stir our souls and make us aspire to what is best in us and others.

The hon. leader of the New Democratic Party made reference to how Canadians are perceived in other countries. I would like to inform her that I was in Salt Lake City throughout the whole Salé-Pelletier controversy and we were stopped by citizens from around the world who recognized the unique character of our Canadian athletes and complimented us as a nation for their conduct. It truly was inspiring and not at all along the lines described by the leader of the New Democratic Party when she says that Canadians are not perceived in that light.

It would be a tremendous opportunity for Canada to once again host the winter Olympic games. To that end the Government of Canada is fully supportive of the bid put forth by the Vancouver-Whistler bid committee to host the 2010 winter Olympic games. Should the committee be successful it would be assured of enthusiastic support to welcome the world and stage the best winter Olympic games ever. It is very important, too, that all Canadians get

Supply

behind this bid. It needs to be recognized as Canada's bid, not just a bid from one region. I encourage everyone to get behind the bid and support the Vancouver-Whistler committee. It is the government's intention to work very co-operatively with the committee.

The Government of Canada is a proud partner in Canadian sport. We work closely with our colleagues in the sport community in the provinces, the territorial governments and the private sector to help create opportunities for Canadians to participate and excel in sport. Sports Canada's budget supports athletes and coaches as well as national sport organizations and national sport centres across the country. These organizations and centres organize and finance training and competitiveness programs for athletes and coaches.

The government has taken concrete action over the past few years to increase the overall funding allocation for sport. The Sports Canada program budget, excluding one time events such as major games, presently stands at \$77 million compared to \$48 million just four years ago, an increase of 38% over that time. This deals with the motion of the New Democratic Party which calls upon us to invest in arts, culture and sports. With the programs I outlined at the beginning of my speech and with the increase in the Sports Canada budget, I can say that we are addressing that already.

The direct financial support for high performance athletes is now at \$16 million, compared to \$8 million in 1998. The monthly stipend for athletes was almost doubled for most athletes in 1999. This has helped them to live modestly while representing Canada in international events.

• (1115)

The government also had a pilot project for these Olympic games called the podium 2000 program, which was a partnership of the Government of Canada, the Canadian Olympic Association, CODA in Calgary, which is the legacy program of the 1998 Olympics, and the private sector. To assist athletes who were very close to the podium, \$1.2 million was invested. We will review the results of that program and hopefully will be in a position to continue a similar type of program in the future.

Canada will soon have a new sports policy which will be focused on both excellence and participation. There need not be any conflict between elite athletes and the participation part of sport, as one should support the other. That is the focus the government will be investing in so that participation sports will be there to act as feeder systems for the elite athletes and elite athletes will be there to provide inspiration to the participants. We will be looking for links with health and education and will work with our provincial partners in that as well.

• (1120)

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when I introduced the motion this morning I expressed the hope that we would not hear the sound of a collective shrug from the government members, the Liberal members of the House, but we have just heard the deafening roar of a shrug from government members.

Supply

The call from Canadians is for a vision for Canada. The call from Canadians is for us to be more than just flag wavers. I absolutely agree with the member that the example set by Salé and Pelletier truly inspired Canadians. It showed they understood that teamwork is important and that individuals have to reach for the stars and give their best. That is what Canadians are looking to this government to do and that is what Canadians are looking to all parliamentarians to do.

Does the member understand that Canadians are hungry to see some sign that the government is not just satisfied with the status quo in response to a challenge about how to save Canada and strengthen its contribution in the world? It is not just about trotting out the sports budget. Does the government member not understand that people are looking for leadership around the very ideals and values that make this country so important to Canadians and to people in many parts of the world who look to us for leadership in an internationally troubled world?

Hon. Paul DeVillers: Mr. Speaker, no, I did not just drag out the sports budget. I made it very clear in my comments that other members would be dealing with other points in the motion.

It is important to address the motion and the 11 points in the plan where we have demonstrated that we are in fact addressing those issues. Considerable new money is being dedicated and committed to the arts, culture and sport. I do not think there is any shrugging going on here. It is simply a matter of responding to the motion and putting the information forward. That was the intent of the comments and I think the case has been made.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Asselin (Charlevoix, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is difficult for the Bloc Québécois to take part in this debate because we are talking about a motion, introduced by the leader of the NDP, which proposes a 12 point plan to save Canada.

Premiers of Quebec such as Robert Bourassa and Daniel Johnson, as well as the former leader of the Liberal Party of Quebec, Claude Ryan, were not sovereignists. They never signed the constitution of 1982. These politicians, whether it be Robert Bourassa, Claude Ryan or Daniel Johnson, always denounced Canada's overlap and interference in provincial jurisdictions, in areas such as health, education and even the environment.

Avoiding such overlap could save the Government of Quebec billions of dollars. What Quebec is calling for, is to collect its own taxes and income taxes in order to be able to govern itself and manage that which belongs to it.

Hon. Paul DeVillers: Mr. Speaker, I understand that the Bloc Québécois does not want to participate in a debate to save Canada. It is quite obvious.

However, as I said earlier in my comments, it is pity that another opposition party, a party that is not trying to break up Canada, is saying in its motion today that Canada needs to be saved. We, on the government side, are convinced that Canada is working well as it is and we will make improvements to ensure that it works even better. We have the vision to do it.

• (1125)

[English]

Mr. Shawn Murphy (Hillsborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to speak against the motion and urge all members on both sides to vote against it.

The first question on everyone's mind is why. Why would a person be against all the principles of the motion? It talks about full employment; a clean environment; lower taxes; and more money for our cities, health care and post-secondary education. The list goes on.

With all due respect to the mover of the motion, I am against it because I do not think it would work. All the principles are utopian. There are none, with the possible exception of numbers 3 and 12, with which I do not agree.

I will expand on that. We are living in Canada. Whether we like it or not Canada is part of the real world. In governing, whether it be a country like Canada, a province, a city or a business, priorities must be set. Objectives must be determined. We must determine when to undertake activities, on what timetable and how to pay for them. A government cannot do everything. A government cannot please every citizen every day. Governments have tried and they have failed.

As I have said, the principles are all laudable. I agree with most of them. If we were not in the House of Commons I would have thought they were written by Aldous Huxley. The only missing principle is that at the end of each day our mothers should give us a piece of apple pie and a hug.

This is not a perfect world. We have conflicts in Afghanistan. We deal in a competitive international trading arena. We have international interest rates. We have inflation. We have an economy. We have international movements of capital. Most importantly, governments, whether they be federal, provincial or municipal, do not have a bottomless pit of money to fund every conceivable program known to citizens.

One item is missing, and I invite all members who speak to the motion today to address it: How would we pay for all these programs, principles and points, of which there are many? The government must be responsible. We have a duty in the House of Commons to speak and act responsibly. We must clearly enunciate to the Canadian people how we would pay for new programs or enhancements to existing programs. I may be wrong and I stand to be corrected, but it is my understanding that there are only two ways to pay for such programs. First, we could increase taxes. Second, we could cut expenditures to existing programs.

I throw a challenge to all members who speak to the motion: We should not spend the rest of the day talking about its principles. Most of us in the House would probably agree with them except for perhaps number 12. Rather, the debate should be clear, specific and focused. It should state clearly the manner in which the programs would be paid for. I invite my hon. colleagues who support the motion to address the issue.

Point number 8 says we should:

Supply

Strengthen Canadian communities, large and small, by reversing the deterioration of our municipalities with stable funding and strategic infrastructure investments.

• (1130)

I support that principle. Since 1993 the government has done a lot with respect to the issue. It has announced at least three and possibly four major infrastructure programs. I agree with the NDP's position that more could be done. We have major issues with respect to urban transportation, water and sewers. They are issues every Canadian citizen and the House should be concerned about. However there is not a bottomless pit of money.

Two points must be made. First, I ask everyone speaking to the motion to figure out what the programs would cost. That is the easy part. With help even I could probably do it.

Second, and this is much more difficult, in the debate today we must identify to the House where the money would come from. I am repeating myself, but there would be only two sources: raising taxes or cutting programs.

I invite my hon. colleagues to clearly and specifically identify to the House the taxes they would raise. One of the principles calls for a fair tax program. I assume that means lowering taxes. I invite my colleagues in the NDP to clearly and specifically identify the programs that would be cut to finance the programs in their motion. It would not be long before they met themselves coming around the corner.

I will give the House an example. It is easy to say we would raise taxes. Point number 10 of the plan says we would have full employment. All economists if not the vast majority support the principle that there is a correlation between lower taxes and job creation. It is easy as long as we do not have to explain it. I support lower taxes and I support full employment.

I hope my colleagues will accept my invitation to change the whole focus of the debate to two issues: First, how much would the principles cost? Second, how would they be paid for? It is incumbent on us today to have an informed and intelligent debate.

I am totally in favour of point number 7. It says we should:

Enable primary producers and Canadian farm families to compete with foreign subsidies, and reject continental energy and water policies that endanger Canadian control over our natural resources.

I come from a province where the main industry is agriculture. I support point number 7. I believe everyone in the House and in the country supports it. There is no question the government could do more. More should be done. I have met with the Minister of Finance and the minister of agriculture. Their response was that there is not enough money in the treasury to go dollar for dollar with the subsidies granted by the American government and the governments of Europe, mainly France, to their producers. We must do more with what we have.

If any government were to adopt the 12 principles holus-bolus Canada would not be saved. It would be destroyed.

I ask everyone to vote against the motion. The balanced approach being followed by the government is the correct approach. It has responded correctly to the terrorist acts of September 11. It has a sound, prudent and correct financial approach to dealing with the

economy of the country. I am pleased with the way it is dealing with the troubled world and the conflict in Afghanistan. I am pleased with the balanced agenda it has set out. I urge everyone to reject the motion.

• (1135)

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am glad the NDP caucus did not make the mistake of thinking the challenge could be solved today or that we would get inspiration or specifics from the government benches about how to strengthen Canada and reinforce our special contribution to the world. If we expected that we would have been sorely disappointed by the comments of the hon. member for Hillsborough.

I did not read the *National Post* yesterday. It is not usually my first source of information. However it made reference to the rookie Liberals who got themselves elected in the year 2000. It said we would not notice they were here unless they vanished. It made rather the same point about the comments made yesterday by the hon. member for Hillsborough. It said that is exactly what he did for half an hour. For 15 minutes today we saw him make a vacuous set of statements that did not address the issue.

I will address his comments briefly and ask him a question. The hon. member said there are only two alternatives if we are to strengthen Canada's social programs, rebuild our municipalities or support our primary producers: either increase taxes or cut programs.

Would the hon. member care to comment on the choice the government made when it went into the election crowing about a \$100 billion surplus? It decided to give away 80% of the surplus in the form of tax cuts to people who least needed them. It then turned around and invited the B.C. Liberal government to massively cut programs and services and introduce new premiums for health care. It pretended this would not be heaping additional taxes on the shoulders of the people of British Columbia. We could go across the country—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): The hon. member for Hillsborough.

Mr. Shawn Murphy: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her question. First, the government has followed a balanced approach. It has undertaken a massive \$100 billion tax cut. As well, 50% of the surplus has gone to tax cuts and 50% has gone to increased social spending.

The hon. member mentioned B.C. The province just had an election. It had an NDP government for seven years. I assume that government adopted, agreed with and embraced the 12 principles. At the end of the day did the NDP government save B.C.? If it saved B.C. why did the electors almost unanimously throw it out? Either they did not want to be saved or they could see through the principles and knew they were not workable. They did not work in B.C. and they would not work in Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Asselin (Charlevoix, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this is blabbering. Why would we want to save Canada when the government is saying that all is well, that everything is going like clockwork and that we are on the right track, while the opposition tells the government every day that some things need to be changed and that it is not going very well at all.

Supply

Quebec never signed the 1982 Constitution. Quebec's National Assembly unanimously rejected the social union framework agreement. Under the Conservative Party, the then Prime minister, Brian Mulroney, also tried to amend the Constitution to change and improve Canada.

Moreover, without the failure of the Meech Lake accord and Charlottetown agreement, the Bloc Quebecois would not be here. Quebec should be recognized as a distinct society. Quebecers should be recognized as a nation.

• (1140)

[English]

Mr. Shawn Murphy: Mr. Speaker, I will repeat my earlier remarks. It is surprising that the hon. member is involved in a debate to save Canada. That is not where he is coming from.

He made the point that I said things were going well. I said I was pleased with the balanced approach being followed by the government. Many issues were raised by the mover of the motion. More can be done and more should be done. However I am pleased with the balanced approach being followed by the government.

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I rise, I must say, with some degree of disappointment in my friends in the NDP, for many of whom I have considerable regard, not because I share their principles but at least because they have some, which I cannot always say for my Liberal friends opposite.

I am disappointed in the motion because it so clearly lacks focus. One of the perennial criticisms of the NDP is that it attempts to be all things to all people and has a kind of Utopian approach to public policy. What is reflected in the very notion of this motion is that we can save Canada, that salvation comes through public policy. That the NDP would present to the House 12 disparate policy ideas to debate in a few hours, I think reflects its lack of focus. It would seem to me that its caucus could not agree on what to bring forward in terms of a supply motion so each of its members got to throw an idea on to the list.

Perhaps the member for Burnaby—Douglas did not participate in the process because I do not see free trade with Cuba on the list. Apart from that, when some of my colleagues first heard there would be a 12 point NDP plan to save Canada, I received a number of e-mails suggesting that we could expect to see things like extending social benefits to house pets, the introduction of a protester protection program and the offer of free day care for all Canadians except bankers' kids. Somebody said that we would need to tax the allowances of children with stay at home parents to pay for the free day care. I was also told we could see Canadians being forced to refer to each other as brother or sister and endangered species being unionized so they could bargain with the government collectively.

Someone else suggested that we might hear about nationalizing WestJet to eliminate competition in the airline industry. Another person submitted that the NDP may want to make the Atlantic economy equal to that of Alberta by ratifying Kyoto and driving Alberta's unemployment levels up to those of Newfoundland. Someone suggested that we would reject NAFTA in this motion and embrace multilateral trade with Iraq, Cuba, North Korea and the PLO.

Finally, number 10 on the list to be anticipated was that the NDP would do for all of Canada what Bob Rae did for Ontario and Glen Clark did for B.C.

We were relieved to see that the NDP did bring forward a couple of sensible ideas but, unfortunately, no substance. First, let me go through its list. It wants Canada to ratify the Kyoto protocol in 2002. This takes no regard for the economic costs of Kyoto which have been estimated to pose a potential cost to the Canadian economy of as much as \$40 billion, or 3% to 4% of GDP, and as many as half a million jobs. This is a ridiculous protocol which exempts all the principal polluters in the world, namely developing countries which have little or no emissions reduction technology. It will not be entered into by the United States, our principal competitor, or Mexico, our two trading partners in the NAFTA .

If the advice of the motion were accepted, Canada would impose upon itself enormous economic costs with little or no environmental gain and it would do nothing to reduce the principal polluters like the People's Republic of China which is exempted from the Kyoto protocol. If we were to follow this advice it would be economic madness with no environmental gain.

The NDP calls on us to strengthen the role of aboriginal, Metis and Inuit people in the Canadian family. Who can disagree with such a motherhood concept? The real challenge though is for the NDP and all parties to take a look at the literally hundreds of billions of dollars that have been spent on programs to assist first nations and aboriginal people but which have today resulted in levels of poverty, unemployment, despair, teen suicide and substance abuse higher than ever before. Something is not working in the way we deliver these programs and passing fuzzy minded motions about making people feel like they are part of a family will not solve the concrete problems experienced by first nations peoples who have been, I think, put at great disadvantage through many of the programs that are currently in place.

I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Mr. Speaker.

• (1145)

The NDP proposes that we reaffirm Canada's international peacekeeping role and rehabilitate Canada's reputation as respected internationalists. This is NDP speak for extreme skepticism in opposition to anything proposed by the United States in the international fora. When it talks about internationalism, its internationalism seems to have an especially close place for regimes such as those in Iraq. When it sees any kind of serious effort to impose United Nations resolutions for inspection of weapons of mass destruction in that tyrannical regime for instance, it is opposed to using the tools available to the international community to avoid rogue regimes from developing weapons of mass destruction. I really do not think this is a country that would want to follow the NDP's advice on foreign policy.

The NDP recommends that the federal government be a full partner in funding health care but to ensure that it is a not for profit system. Every doctor in the country profits from the health care system. Thousands of clinics, which operate within the publicly funded health care system, generate a profit. Profit is not a dirty word. The NDP should end its obsession with eliminating the only economic incentive which exists from operating within the health care system. Of course we need full federal funding and we support funding going back to 1994 levels.

The NDP wants to implement a comprehensive strategy for the eradication of child poverty. Everyone would like to eliminate not just child poverty but poverty in general. We would like to eliminate pain and suffering as well. We must understand that we have developed a multibillion dollar poverty industry which has not appreciably seen a reduction in the levels of poverty. Furthermore, the NDP uses statistics based on the low income cutoff line of Statistics Canada which does not measure absolute poverty but relative inequity in incomes. That is not a rational basis for public policy.

The NDP wants to ensure that trade agreements include adequate protection for labour standards in a human rights environment. I agree with the impulse here. I spoke yesterday against the accession of the People's Republic China to the WTO because of its human rights violations. We must be very careful about the kind of caveats we add to trade accords with other civilized democratic nations. These could completely vitiate the purpose of free trade and reduce the opportunity for developing countries to enter into the circle of exchange which has seen living standards across the world increase by so much over the past several decades.

The NDP wants to ensure that Canadian primary producers and farm families can compete with foreign subsidies. We agree with that but in the long run the real focus has to be on getting our farmers and primary producers a fair market price for their products, which they do not have because of foreign subsidies. Rather than ratcheting up a foreign subsidy war endlessly where farmers across the world lose, along with food consumers, we must, as one of our top foreign policies and trade objectives, eliminate price distorting agricultural subsidies throughout the world.

The NDP wants stable funding for strategic infrastructure. We agree with that but by strategic infrastructure we think the government should finance hard, meaningful transportation infrastructure for instance, not pork in government ridings which too often is the case.

The NDP also wants to celebrate immigration and diversity, a motherhood statement with which I cannot take exception.

The NDP wants to reaffirm fair taxes. We knew what that meant when Bob Rae had his fair tax commission and told us that anyone who earned over \$50,000 a year was rich. In other words, anyone with an above average income should have a disproportionate tax burden.

The NDP wants to strengthen Canadian culture. We do too but we think Canadians are the best people to direct and finance their own culture and do not need bureaucrats and government programs to do so on their behalf all the time.

Supply

Finally, one point that I do wholeheartedly share agreement on with the NDP is number 12 which would strengthen Canadian democracy through parliamentary and electoral reform. We are the only party that shares with the NDP a policy that supports electoral reform to some more proportionate system of representation and of parliamentary reform.

• (1150)

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member for Calgary Southeast has had much to say and of course we have only moments in which to respond, so I will go directly to the heart of this issue, to what I think is this cynical and mischievous suggestion made by so many members of the House when they constantly confuse legitimate critique of American policy, whether it is foreign policy, social policy or whatever, with anti-Americanism.

I think this is one of the things Canadians find deeply disturbing, because the reality is that Canadians are concerned about the slide that is taking place to the point where people feel more and more that we have only one more step before, in meaningful terms, maybe not in geographic terms or boundaries, that Canada will be little more than the 51st state.

If the member had heard my opening comments, I made the point he has chosen to ignore: that not only is it fair game, it is essential that we look very closely at what is happening in the United States of America today before we just allow ourselves to slide into a merger that makes us indistinguishable.

I will quote again briefly and ask the minister to respond to another response I received when I put out the challenge of how people would wish to see Canada's sovereignty strengthened. This is what one person wrote:

I don't believe many Canadians are anti-American, but an awful lot of us hate what we see happening in America today. We don't want any part of the new militarism that says to hell with social programs, let's kick butt around the world. We don't want a health care system that leaves 30% of the people with no coverage, many of the rest paying user fees and dealing with heartless HMOs. We don't want an underclass in our society, but we see homeless people sleeping in bank lobbies in middle class neighbourhoods at the same time as we see high end tax cuts and the end of social housing.

Can this member not understand that Canadians want us to distinguish ourselves from our neighbours to the south with policies that are fundamentally different and that are based on—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): The hon. member for Calgary Southeast in response.

Mr. Jason Kenney: Mr. Speaker, of course I can understand that Canadians want to distinguish themselves in fundamental ways from our friends to the south. Some of my ancestors were United Empire Loyalists who fled to this country for precisely that reason.

Supply

However, my conception of what distinguishes us from the United States is a tradition of ordered liberty, a different kind of political tradition from that of the United States. It does not mean that I take an attitude of hostility toward the role played by the United States on the international stage. The hon. member quotes approvingly from a letter criticizing the American attitude of “to hell with social programs and let's kick butt around the world”. Hundreds of thousands of young Americans have died in wars in the past century and indeed they have died in the past months to help to preserve the stability of the world order and freedom in foreign countries.

My hon. friend may think the American role in Afghanistan was some exercise in militaristic jingoism, but when I saw the faces of people in Kabul who had been liberated from one of the most oppressive regimes in the world I did not see people who felt that they were pawns in some militaristic American scheme of the military-industrial complex at the Pentagon. What I saw were people who appreciated that at least one foreign power, with the assistance of the United Kingdom, had finally taken seriously their plight and had lent its resources and indeed some American lives to liberate them. I think that is a noble role, which the United States has very often played in the past century, and I think we should be ashamed of ourselves for not participating in that role more vigorously.

• (1155)

Mr. Ken Epp: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Notwithstanding that the hon. member from Calgary indicated he was sharing his time with the member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, my schedule will not permit me to speak unless we can switch. My colleague and I have agreed, if it is with consent of the House, that I will go next and he will take my spot later.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Does the House give unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the consent of my colleagues to permit this to occur. I have been at a finance committee meeting and I have other duties this afternoon. The way the rotation goes it would not have been possible for me to rise and I would like to add to this debate. I really appreciate this accommodation, especially my colleague's.

I find it very interesting that the New Democratic Party has come up today with a very broad based, multi-point approach to how it would, in its words, save Canada. I would like to take the opportunity in the few minutes I have to address the last of the issues first and if I have time I will go on to another one. It has to do with democratic reform.

I am so eager to speak on this because of what has been happening around this place, in my observation, for the last eight and a half years and particularly in the last couple of weeks. I have found that probably the more distressing thing with respect to our democracy is not even how we get here but rather what happens to us when we are here. The point the NDP motion makes is that it would strengthen Canadian democracy through parliamentary and electoral reform, including proportional representation. I would really like to know what the party is proposing with respect to parliamentary reform.

The Liberals have a strange idea. They think they can strengthen the role of members of parliament by giving them a raise. We went

though that last year. A former Liberal prime minister said that 50 feet off the Hill a member of parliament is nothing. I do not know how we can express this, but it appears to me that within 50 feet of the Hill and inside this place a member of parliament is less than nothing. No members of parliament count around here.

I am speaking specifically of what happens in the House and what happens in committee. I left the finance committee just a few minutes ago and I am fired up about this because what is happening there is so wrong, wrong, wrong. We have a finance committee that right now as we speak is dealing with how to gut a private member's bill. It is incredible. In this case I happen to have some serious questions about the private member's bill being debated there, but the fact of the matter is that it went to committee because it passed the House. A member from the Bloc had a private member's bill and was able to persuade the House, in second reading, that it should be referred to committee for further study. All the members here voted in favour of it and now that private member's bill is being scuttled. Basically the committee will be returning a blank sheet of paper to this place with a recommendation that it not be acted upon, which is bizarre to say the least.

I was caught in a conundrum. How does one vote on that? Shall this blank piece of paper pass or not? If I voted for it, it would have meant I was giving consent somehow to what the committee had done to blank the piece of paper. If I voted against it, it could be implied that I was not in favour of the bill, which was passed by the House. There is something really dreadfully wrong.

I have observed that of all of the time we spend debating in the House, probably the best times are days like today when we have an opposition motion, when opposition parties are able to bring forward an idea that resonates with the people we hear from out in the ridings, whereas from the government's side we usually get the government's agenda.

• (1200)

With all due respect, it seems to me that the cabinet members, the government as they are called, the front benches, are greatly out of touch with ordinary people. They have their agenda and they push it forward. They use the mechanisms that have become accepted in this place because of the traditions we have allowed to develop here which have totally emasculated the whole functioning of parliament.

We see it here in the Chamber, but now we are also seeing it in committee. In fact it has always been thus and I guess until this last couple of weeks I have just sort of gritted my teeth and said I will go along with it, but now I am starting to feel way down deep inside the same frustration felt by our colleague in the previous parliament, Lee Morrison, the member from Grasslands in Saskatchewan, who happened to be my parents' MP. In his last statement in the House he said he was leaving this place and declared that it had been seven years of his life wasted. I am starting to think that too and that is totally regrettable.

Here we are, 301 elected members. The Prime Minister thinks we are so important that he jammed through a pay raise for members of parliament, then he does not permit any of us to use our heads and to demonstrate that we are also leaders in this country and able to make contributions.

We had a fiasco in finance committee last week in which the members of the committee who wished to elect a chairman based on ability, on their assessment of who would best serve the country as a spokesperson for financial issues, were scuttled by the Prime Minister's Office and by the presence of the whip in the finance committee to the point that a different chairperson was elected. So be it, but it was wrong.

It is wrong that instead of allowing members of parliament to make the best decision we get these forced plays. Not only does it mean this for me as a member of parliament from the opposition side, but those members of parliament from the governing side are not permitted to even think for themselves or vote for themselves. They do not deserve a raise in pay. They deserve to get out of here. If this continues, what parliament will need is about five people up at the front who will say "we'll make all the decisions, trust us", which is what it is now. The only difference is that we have a whole bunch of these blow-up dolls who, on command when someone pumps their little pump, stand up and vote. Then someone pulls the plug and they are down again and we do not see them again. That is ridiculous.

God gave me a brain to use. He gave me ears to hear what my constituents are saying. I am expected as a professional person to come here to represent, to speak, to think, to analyze, and when the final decision is made I will vote the way I believe is right. I think it is unconscionable that the whip from the governing party should say to us "be careful how you vote, there could be consequences". Of course there would be consequences. We vote wisely and if we do not the consequences are that our electorate may not send us back again. However the consequences are not that someone will put the screws to us in this place. If that is the way this place operates, then let us shut it down. I regret that many of our young people, the pages who serve us so well here, would be without jobs. That is too bad because we have learned to really like them. They serve us well and it is nice for them to be here.

I think that what we need to do is empower members of parliament when they get here, whether it is by a proportional system or a first past the post system or some combination thereof. Yes, I think we should study that, but when we are here we ask that we please be given dignity and respect, respect that we are able to use our own heads, and we ask that we get rid of the shameful control by the Prime Minister's Office. That is the parliamentary reform we need. Some people say that then it will all come apart at the seams, but some of the stuff that happens around here should come apart at the seams.

•(1205)

I believe in the competition of ideas. Let us debate with each other. If I can persuade someone by reasonable argument then obviously among all of us in committee and in the House, the best decisions for the people of Canada will be made.

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Madam Speaker, it may surprise some people to hear me say that I agree with the fundamental point made by the Alliance member. We do need parliamentary reform. We need parliamentary reform for some of the reasons cited by the member.

Supply

Basically the government is arrogant because of its numbers. It is also arrogant because there are so many ways in which it can squash dissent, quell debate and in the end, simply run roughshod over the work of parliamentarians. Members earnestly and conscientiously serve on committees, hear from members of the public who bring forth recommendations to the government and then the government thumbs its nose at them.

It is absolutely incredible that there are autocratic powers which reside with the Prime Minister today. Clearly we do need parliamentary reform.

We need to make sure that when a parliamentary committee votes unanimously, for example to urge the government to end sanctions in Iraq that are killing 5,000 children a month, that the government actually does something about it. When a parliamentary committee proposes major improvements in a piece of legislation to save endangered species, we have to ensure that there is no heavy-handed interference from government members who decide that they want to completely push aside the recommendations made by the committee.

Does the member think it is incumbent upon each and every one of us to examine personally as parliamentarians and as political parties our own conduct? Should we examine how we create contempt in the public mind for parliament and how we create a lack of confidence in parliament?

Is the member willing to acknowledge that the kind of anti-politics practised by the Alliance, the kind of notion that the only way to improve Canada is to shrink down government, is an erosion of democracy itself, both people's belief in and participation in the political process? Is it not also eroding the government's capacity to do what Canadians want done such as improving health care, ensuring an accessible education system, building safe transportation and environmental infrastructure in the country, the things that really do matter to Canadians?

The Alliance Party keeps insisting that taxes per force are the scourge of the earth. Does the member not recognize that it is very difficult to maintain public health and education systems and other infrastructures that matter to all Canadians, the cost of which should be shared on a progressive basis through our taxation system?

•(1210)

Mr. Ken Epp: Madam Speaker, I always said in various debates that our conclusions derive from our first assumptions and are then driven by the analytic process we apply to the assumptions.

I want the member to know that I grew up in Saskatchewan in what is probably the birthplace of Canada's socialism. I was a teenager during the good old Tommy Douglas and CCF days. My dad and mom never indicated how they voted even to their kids, but I would venture to guess that there were times when Tommy Douglas got my family's votes because we believed in some of the things he was doing.

Supply

Swift Current where I grew up was where socialized medicine began in the whole country. It was our health unit which first said that through municipal taxes health care would be provided for Canadians so that no member of that area would go without needed health care because they were too poor to pay. That is a principle in which we still believe. If the member would take the time to read our policies, she would see that.

It is a disservice to say that we are against everything. It is not an accurate representation of Canadian Alliance policies.

We need to work together. We must solve the root problem of how representatives of the people work here and work through the problems to come up with the best solutions. We could have solutions which in some areas may look left-wing. We could have some solutions that look right-wing. But we could come up with the best solutions in all areas that would best serve Canadians.

Maybe we should think about doing away with labels and start to debate in a meaningful way the actual ideas with which we are challenged. We should allow a majority of members in the House of Commons through their own thinking and analysis to make the best laws possible for our country.

[Translation]

Ms. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Madam Speaker, first of all, I wish to say that I will be sharing my time with the member for Rosemont—Petite-Patrie.

When I read the title of this motion, I was worried, and even more so when I learned that it came from the NDP. However, when I read the motion in its entirety, I no longer knew what to think, except that it was very clear that this plan had absolutely nothing to do with Quebec.

I understand that it is a plan to save Canada, based on the assumption that Canadians expect Quebec to leave, and we are anxious to do so. However, this plan raises questions. Canada—and I could speak about it as would a professor speaking about a neighbouring country—is still a confederation which is, in fact, a federation of ten provinces.

These provinces have powers, jurisdictions, and I would even go so far as to say that these provinces—which could be called something else in a country as large as Canada—are essential to the attainment of generous objectives, which are expressed here.

These objectives are generous, but since no account is taken of the need to involve the organization in the provinces, most of these generous ideas remain, in my view, unrealistic. I am not saying that a real plan would not be needed, and perhaps the party will take steps to come up with one following this debate.

I will begin, however, by reading an article which appeared in *La Presse* on April 4, 1962. It was written by a young journalist by the name of Guy Lamarche. It describes an interview with T.C. Douglas and is entitled “A federal party should not be afraid to affirm Canadian bi-nationalism”. Here is how T.C. Douglas explained, in 1962, what he would do so that there would be no more separatists in Quebec.

I refer you to our program, replied Mr. Douglas. Our social and economic planning will be decentralized and each level of government will be able to act within its jurisdiction. When a problem that is national in scope arises, the federal

government will call the provinces together, and they will reach an agreement themselves.

The journalist went on to say:

Mr. Douglas used an example that was in the news: the national hydro-electric system. There was no doubt in his mind that Canada needed one. In this case, the federal government should call the provinces together, ask them to conclude an agreement, and provide the money necessary for its implementation: nothing more.

It is worth noting that 1962 is the period during which hydro-electricity was nationalized in Quebec.

• (1215)

We know Quebec paid for its own hydroelectric development, whereas development of nuclear power in the rest of Canada was done with sizeable federal subsidies.

I read this because the rest of the plan is centralist. It is based on the fact that the source must be here, with the federal government and the federal public service.

I would like to speak of Quebec. Taking point 5, on the eradication of child poverty, I would refer to what has been done in Quebec, starting back when René Lévesque was a federalist. He said, “A plan to eradicate poverty must be totally made in Quebec by Quebecers, because they will ensure that measures are integrated with each other, and can be effective”.

I will read a little further on if I may, the conclusion of the text, which we know he wrote himself at the federal-provincial conference on poverty in early 1966.

He said:

It has become imperative to establish a genuine economic and social policy. This policy should be integrated, flexible in its mechanisms and include a social security system centred on the family and based on the right to assistance on the basis of need.

For the sake of efficiency and on constitutional grounds, the Quebec government alone can and should, within its own territory, design and implement such a policy. Quebec cannot not let the Government of Canada assume this responsibility. Quebec does not, however, exclude interprovincial co-operation and mutual consultation.

Mr. Lévesque went on to say:

The social and economic development policy we have formulated will create an integrated social policy, regional development policy, manpower policy, health policy, housing policy and job training policy. Not all these policies have been described in the present document, but we feel it is important to indicate in these conclusions that they are all among the instruments we plan to use in order to attain our objectives.

Finally, he said:

The general policy, while we do not necessarily condemn it, does not necessarily correspond, in terms of its spirit and terms of application, to one the Government of Canada might opt for. The people of Quebec will, however, enjoy at least as many if not more benefits than other Canadians.

I just got back from a meeting held here with parliamentarians from the Council of Europe. The issues discussed included children, poverty and early childhood. In the package relating to this conference and prepared for the Canadian parliament, there is a document from the Library of Parliament in which Quebec is mentioned as showing leadership in this area. The document refers, among other things, to the \$5 daycare policy.

At the very end, a participant representing civil society talked about the \$5 daycare and quoted me as having said that, since 1984—he could have said 1962—Quebec has had an integrated policy that includes this and that element. Quebec implemented that policy. It found the economic means to implement that policy. The participant also indicated that this is what the rest of Canada needs.

If I had said that, I would not have convinced my fellow European parliamentarians nearly as much. Nevertheless, I was very pleased that this person said that.

I am using that example because, to save Canada, which is Quebec's neighbour, it is clear that this model is based on people taking charge, people, community groups and municipalities that cannot be funded exclusively by Ottawa. There must be an integrated plan.

• (1220)

In Canada, this may be integrated right across the country, but socially and economically integrated policies are necessary; otherwise, we will not be getting anywhere.

[*English*]

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, just a comment and a question to the hon. member from the Bloc who just spoke. I guess I should not be surprised that members from the Bloc Quebecois would not want to support a motion to save Canada because they are not in the business of saving Canada. In fact, they are in the business, if their highest hopes were to come true, of dismantling Canada.

Putting that aside for a minute, because that is not what the hon. member spoke to primarily, the Bloc is grasping at straws here. As far as I know, the Bloc is not against ratifying the Kyoto protocol, at least not that I have been able to detect.

Are they against strengthening the role of aboriginal, Metis and Inuit people in the Canadian family? Maybe it is the words Canadian family they object to because certainly the government of Quebec just entered into an agreement with the Cree of northern Quebec to strengthen their role as a part of Quebec which is still part of Canada.

When it comes to reaffirming Canada's international peacekeeping role, is it the word Canada is it the word peacekeeping that is the problem?

As far as rehabilitating Canada's reputation as a respected internationalist, day after day the Bloc has asked questions of the government in the House about Canada's abdication of its traditional internationalist perspective.

Is the Bloc opposed to ensuring all trade agreements include adequate protection for labour standards, human rights and the environment? This is news. We cannot hardly wait to put this on our website.

Is enabling primary producers and Canadian farm families to compete with foreign subsidies something the Bloc is against or would it had to have said Quebec farm families? Is there something wrong with it because it says Canadian farm families?

Then we have rejecting continental energy and water policies that endanger Canadian control over natural resources. Again, I would

Supply

have thought that protecting Canadian or at least sovereignty over these resources would have been something that the Bloc Quebecois would have been interested in. It goes on and on.

The one thing that the member from the Bloc isolated and talked a lot about was implementing a comprehensive strategy for the eradication of child poverty. A comprehensive strategy could be a co-operative federalist strategy. There is nothing in this that precludes the kind of strategy that the hon. member talked about. To me this is a case of seeing a centralist under every bed. Just as Americans used to see a communist under every bed, the Bloc is now saying that it sees a centralist under every bed.

Even the former leader of her party, Lucien Bouchard, when he was in the House, voted for the motion to which this implicitly refers. He voted in 1989, as a minister in the Mulroney government, for a motion of the House to eliminate child poverty by the year 2000. Was he betraying Quebec? Was he not acting in the best interests of Quebec by voting for that motion? No. He understood, and I am sure the member would understand upon reflection, that when we talk about a comprehensive strategy, it could respect the jurisdiction of Quebec. In fact it should.

The Bloc seems to be grasping at straws. It seems that their members decided this morning not to support the NDP motion because it talks about Canada, so they have to find some kind of picky reason for not supporting it. To each his own. However the member would have been much better served to have supported our motion.

• (1225)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: Madam Speaker, this attack by the member does not surprise me, but it does disappoint me a little.

As I have said from the start, we subscribe to the general objectives. We are, however, opposed to the way they wish to attain them, particularly when, as hon. members are aware, there are 38 MPs from Quebec here, and what has been discussed has been absolutely everything but the particular problem that Quebec constitutes. This of necessity calls for a reaction on our part.

We have spoken in favour of the Kyoto protocol, and not only have we spoken about it, in Quebec we have also taken action on it. One could take each of these points and say that we in Quebec have already moved on it and even pushed for it. Who were the first ones to call for the agreements—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): I am sorry to have to interrupt the hon. member but, unfortunately, her time has expired. I would also remind hon. members that they must all address the Chair. The hon. member for Rosemont—Petite-Patrie .

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—Petite-Patrie, BQ) Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today, following my colleague, in the debate on the New Democratic Party's motion.

Supply

First, I would like to say that we now fully understand the reason behind such a motion. I say this in a friendly and brotherly to my colleagues from the NDP, because I am a progressive—I say this quite honestly—and I have defended causes here in the House that fully attest to this fact. However, it is important to understand that the NDP, through this motion, through this type of attitude that is in line with, improves and perfects the vision of nation building that the members opposite have developed, is excluding, is at odds with, and is marginalizing Quebec's reality. I say this in all honesty, and not to be mean to my colleagues from the NDP.

As my colleague was saying, fundamentally, the great majority of us support the principles set out in the motion, but we do not believe that this is the way to meet these objectives. We believe that this way of going about it, by setting Canadian objectives and national standards, will not allow these objectives found in the NDP motion, objectives that are viable and right, to be met.

Allow me to take but one example, the first point in the New Democratic Party's plan to save Canada, which reads as follows:

Enhance Canada's environment, including a national implementation plan for reducing green house gases, and ratification of the Kyoto Protocol, in 2002.

We are not against this principle. However, in Quebec, there is an action plan for climate change. There are only two provinces in Canada that have an action plan that could be described by us, Quebecers, as a national plan.

Quebec has an action plan for climate change. Because of this plan—I will not go back 20 years because some will say that it was Quebec's focus on hydroelectricity that gave it an advantage; I will go only ten years back in time, from 1990 to 1999—Quebec reduced its greenhouse gas emissions by 3% per capita, while Alberta increased its emissions by 7%. This is a fact.

We do not necessarily need a national action plan in Canada to meet the greenhouse gas emission reduction objectives. Quebec has demonstrated that it can meet these objectives within its areas of responsibility.

I am saying it today and I will always say it: the mistake made by Canada regarding Kyoto is that the provinces were not consulted for 10 years. The difference between Europe and Canada is that when the 15 members of the European Union arrived in Kyoto, in 1997, they knew what the efforts made to reduce greenhouse gas emissions represented. They knew because they had true consultation, true co-operation. Member countries, sovereign countries were called upon to get involved, thus making Europe a key player in the fight against greenhouse gas emissions.

Where did Canada's national vision to reduce greenhouse gas emissions take us? Nowhere. I would even go further. Had it not been for the Quebec national action plan on climate change, Canada would be the world's worst polluter. And today they are talking about a national plan? This does not make any sense.

• (1230)

How could 15 sovereign countries, members of the European Union, agree on objectives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and achieve significant progress, when our federation has not managed to take this important step? There is a lesson to be learned from this situation. Why? Because it is the provinces that are dealing with the

reality. Some day, this government will have to realize that it can never implement a national action plan on climate change, because Canada is different from one end to the other, and because each province has a different economic structure and a different climate.

It is obvious that Quebec's climate is not the same as the one in British Columbia. It is simply not possible to develop a national policy, because Canada is different from one end to the other. And not only because Quebec has a different culture and language, but because our economic structure is different and takes into account different natural resources. We enjoy economic diversity. How can we achieve our objectives? Certainly not through national plans. These objectives can only be achieved through regional plans.

I can understand Alberta saying today “The Kyoto protocol will be terrible for us”. Of course it will, because Alberta's energy situation is not the same as Quebec's. How can there be a national energy policy in Canada when our energy situations are different? We want an energy policy that addresses the notion of wind chargers. Fine, but the reality is that most of the wind charger potential is in Quebec. The geographic realities, the economic structures, and our climate are different. We must adapt our strategies accordingly.

That is why I am saying that the 12 points put forward by the New Democratic Party are, with a few exceptions, principles with which I agree completely. However, the proposed emphasis on Canadian nation building is not the way to attain the laudable principles of this proposal. And when this is understood, so will many other things be understood.

People will understand that the very reason that Quebec wants to become sovereign, apart of course from wanting to preserve its language, its culture and its history, is that these 12 objectives can be attained only if there is a real transfer of powers from Ottawa to Quebec City.

In my very frank opinion, the Kyoto protocol could actually result in failure. Canada will perhaps be responsible—not that I wish it—for the failure of a real international consensus. Why? Because the provinces were not involved. Alberta does not know what the impact will be of the greenhouse gas emission reduction goals set in Kyoto. The government is trying to get Quebec to help pay for attaining these objectives.

In conclusion, these are laudable objectives, but many of them will remain unattained as long as there are no regional policies, no real decentralization of powers to the provinces, because this country is not the same coast to coast. If the New Democratic Party members truly want to attain these 12 objectives, they will have to get one thing straight and that is that the constitutional order must be changed.

• (1235)

[English]

Mr. Dick Proctor (Palliser, NDP): Madam Speaker, I congratulate the member from the Bloc Québécois on his speech.

The member spent a lot of time talking about Kyoto and the situation in Canada at the moment. We recognize that the province of Quebec has moved to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and other pollutants in our atmosphere. If I heard the member correctly, and I listened as attentively as I could, I thought I heard him say that we had to solve these problems regionally, that Alberta, to use his example, was not going to agree with the rest of Canada. To extrapolate from his speech, it seemed to me that the member was saying that we should throw it over to an international body to administer.

I question whether that is the right approach to take. Should we not be trying very hard to sort out our problems here at home before we throw them to an international body to resolve them for us?

• (1240)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Bigras: Madam Speaker, I am not saying that we must entrust our problems to international organizations. I will try to explain what I am saying as simply and as clearly as possible.

When it comes to the issue of climate change, why did we not adopt the European model? In 1997, when the Kyoto protocol was signed, the European Union negotiated objectives for greenhouse gas reduction, like Canada. One year prior, the European Union had negotiated objectives for greenhouse gas reductions. When it arrived in Kyoto in 1997, and when it signed the agreement, it knew what the greenhouse gas reduction efforts represented for each of the 15 sovereign countries of the European Union.

We have taken a different approach, a national approach. Canada negotiated for the Canadian provinces, without knowing what the effects of signing the Kyoto protocol would be for the provinces. Because of this, the provinces were not able to prepare themselves.

What I am saying is this: let us adopt a confederation-based model, like a true confederation, as dictated and written by the Fathers of Confederation: real decentralization and real sovereignty for the provinces. This type of model would allow the provinces to know what they are doing and would require them to achieve results and answer to a supranational organization. We would have the results and know where we are going. That is the difference.

Instead of nation building, we are proposing a European style confederal union, which would allow us to be equal partners. I can assure the House that we would not be experiencing the chaos that we are experiencing today when it comes to climate change if we had taken the European approach for this simple problem.

How is it that 15 sovereign countries were able to agree among themselves to negotiate greenhouse gas reduction efforts in Kyoto, yet we in Canada are not capable of agreeing among ourselves? Perhaps it is because there is a problem with consultations among partners. Perhaps it is because the federal government acted paternalistically toward the provinces for five years.

Today, Canada finds itself isolated. It will end up paying for it, even though I hope that that will not be the case. Canada, because of its national vision and national approach lacking in consultations, must not be responsible for the failure of the international consensus on the Kyoto protocol.

Supply

[*English*]

Mrs. Elsie Wayne (Saint John, PC/DR): Madam Speaker, I am grateful to my colleagues in the New Democratic Party for providing all of us in the House today with the opportunity to debate so many important issues. While I certainly could speak to many of the points raised in the NDP's 12 point plan to save Canada, I will limit my comments to the issue of peacekeeping and the eighth point as well.

The third point states:

Reaffirm Canada's international peacekeeping role and rehabilitate Canada's reputation as respected internationalists.

Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Fraser Valley if he shows up, and if he does not, I will continue on.

Canada's reputation as an international peacekeeping nation is one we have earned through two generations of tireless and selfless work on behalf of the people of the world. Our accomplishments in the name of peace and freedom time and again have earned the respect and appreciation of countless nations and their citizens.

When an international conflict arises, Canada is the nation most often sought to help resolve disputes and restore order. That is a history and a heritage of which each and every one of us in Canada should be proud. It is not a luxury and it is not a laurel upon which we can rest. The government and the people of Canada must continuously prove themselves to be deserving of the trust, faith and hope of the world.

I have a personal fear, one which I believe is shared by colleagues in the NDP caucus, that due to ill-advised foreign policies and shortsighted spending cuts in the area of national defence, we are on the verge of losing our reputation as peacekeepers around the world.

I have said countless times in the House but it is worth repeating that our men and women in uniform are the best in the world. Their courage and their compassion are second to none. They have earned our support and respect. Therefore, when we criticize the government for its defence policy, we are not criticizing our Canadian armed forces personnel, even though that is often how the government portrays us.

The people of Canada must recognize that their government has led them astray. The people of Canada must recognize that the government has squandered too many precious opportunities to demonstrate those Canadian values and ethics that have made us the envy of all others.

One might have thought, one might have even expected, given the leading role played by the Liberal Party and its former leader Lester Pearson in the creation of the modern notion of peacekeeping, that the Liberal Party of Canada today would have done more to secure our legacy. Sadly, for reasons that are unclear to others and myself, the government has turned its back on the principles of peacekeeping. Those are the principles of Lester B. Pearson.

The NDP motion suggests that we should reaffirm Canada's peacekeeping role. I could not agree more.

Supply

In the past decade, despite the heroic efforts of our nation's best peacekeepers, our reputation as a peacekeeping nation has declined. That is not because our men and women in the field have stopped shedding their blood, sweat and tears. It is quite the contrary. The reason for this decline has been that our government has departed from those bedrock principles that have guided us so well.

Under the faulty belief that the cold war was over, the government made significant cuts to our military's budget that necessarily had the effect of reducing our ability to respond in an effective or immediate manner to troubles when and where they arose.

I do not claim to be an expert in foreign policy. In fact I am certain that my colleague from Cumberland—Colchester is far more experienced in such matters than I am. What I do know, and what is obvious to anyone willing to look at the cold hard facts, is that our nation has not used its credibility in its foreign affairs to maintain our reputation in peacekeeping.

●(1245)

At the present time our defence department's resources are so low and our people are stretched to the limit. When new situations develop and new requests are made we are forced to make massive adjustments to our troop allocations often at the expense of other programs and interests.

Our military planning should not be a game of musical chairs. Not only do we owe our own people a clear and unwavering commitment to peace and security we owe that commitment, by extension, to the people in those nations who are ravaged by the tyranny of war. That, my colleagues, is the Canadian tradition.

I have risen in this place many times to sing the praises of our military and our war veterans. I have spoken of the vigilance and diligence of our fighting forces irrespective of the missions they have been asked to undertake or to which far corner of the globe they have been dispatched.

It was the shocking and tragic events of September 11 that reinforced how truly vital their contribution is and how we must always be prepared. Now more than ever our unique abilities are needed. Now more than ever our men and women in uniform will be called upon to protect our freedom both here and abroad. We must be ready for that call and must provide our people with the tools they need to do their jobs. We cannot afford to wait.

I recognize that the Minister of National Defence has recently agreed that the time has come for us to review our country's defence policy. While I applaud and share this view it must be noted that this is a view that has been held by countless others, myself included, for a number of years. The minister has turned a blind eye to the troubles of our military, in part out of cabinet and caucus solidarity, and in part, because he is uncertain about where to take us. That is the problem. It is not that the government is suffering from a lack of will. It is a lack of vision that has paralyzed it.

The Liberals came to power faced with the towering duties and obligations that we have earned through a lifetime of global service and they simply did not know how to start addressing the many issues on our plate. They claimed that in the new post-cold war world Canada would not need to be as strong as it once was. We warned them that they were wrong. They claimed Canada's military

could continue to be as effective with only a fraction of the resources at its disposal. We warned them they were wrong.

There are times when a person enjoys being vindicated and proven right, but I doubt that any of my colleagues on the opposition benches would say that they got any joy from being proven right when events showed us how wrong our government was.

The fight against the evils of the world is a never ending battle. There is no time for us to stop and take a breather. We do not have the luxury of taking a shift on the bench and letting others take our place. Any government or any minister who feels that we can let our guard down if even for an instant should take a long hard look at how our world has changed in the last six months. That is the problem.

Even the most forward thinking government policy can be derailed by sudden events and unpredicted circumstances. That is why we must always prepare for the worst, not for the best. That is why we must always have a robust military in place that is capable of handling any situation that we throw at them.

That means having airlift and sealift capability to transport our own people and equipment to where they are needed, not looking to President Bush to do it. That means having helicopters and aircraft that are younger than the pilots who fly them and not looking to President Bush to once again take over and meet our needs. That means giving our men and women in uniform the uniforms they need to have. We cannot cut corners.

We have been warned by our American friends through their ambassador and by our NATO allies through Lord Robertson that we are not doing enough. When we let ourselves coast, the nations of the world, the good, the bad and the indifferent, all take notice.

I for one am not satisfied with the status quo. I for one am not willing to stand idle as we let our reputation as a peacekeeping nation fade away into the pages of history. We have a duty. It is a duty that we must take seriously. It is a duty that we have earned with the blood and sweat of our nation's best. Let us never forget it. Let us never forget the lives that are at stake. I feel very strongly we must look after our military and it must be a priority.

●(1250)

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Madam Speaker, I regret that I was not able to hear the introductory comments of the member who has just spoken because I was tied up in an interview. I did arrive in time to hear her speak passionately on Canada's important role as peacekeeper and I commend her for that.

I agree with her that we cannot keep adding more responsibilities and taking on more missions by our peacekeepers and then not give them the support that they require to do their job and to ensure their safety and protection.

In the broader context, and I do not want to erode for a moment the importance of that issue because I share that concern, does the hon. member share the concern that has been articulated by many informed critics of what is happening in the world today?

In particular I want to pay tribute to a former member of the Progressive Conservative Party, a member in the House for many years, Douglas Roche, who is now an independent senator. He expressed his concern that for the entire array and battery and range of comprehensive programs, services, responsibilities, and mandates of the United Nations, that it has a \$10 billion budget to work with annually whereas at the very same time the world continues to spend more than \$800 billion a year in armaments.

Would the hon. member comment on what she sees as the responsibility and internationalist role for Canada in addressing what is surely a major concern that we all, as parliamentarians, ought to be focussing on?

• (1255)

Mrs. Elsie Wayne: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. leader of the NDP for the question. The UN has been critical of Canada recently. NATO has stated that we have not put enough money into our military budget for the job that it has to do.

Canada is known around the world as a country that reaches out to bring peace whenever there is a conflict. We have done that in Bosnia and around the world. We will continue to do that but we can only continue if we give our men and women the tools to do their job.

Last week one of our men in the military in Afghanistan sent a note home to ask if his parents would send him a box of food because he was hungry. I cannot believe we have done this.

I know the hon. member has heard about the Raging Grannies. I will appeal to them and if they can sew I will ask them to get other seniors who can sew across this nation and within 30 days we will have all 750 uniforms for our men over there. We will send our military personnel the uniforms they need and should have.

There was a report called "Caught in the Middle" produced by retired colonels, generals and admirals in Canada. They stated that our military was caught in the middle and it needed \$1 billion more every year for the next five years to stabilize it. That amount is to stabilize it and then we need billions more on top of that. We do not want terrorists in Canada and we must ensure we have a military with the tools to look after itself.

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, PC/DR): Madam Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak to the very broad motion brought forward by the NDP. It is a kind of scattergun approach. It covers almost everything under the sun. Much of it is easy to agree with because it is pretty much motherhood and apple pie.

For example, everyone wants to strengthen the role of aboriginals, Metis and Inuit in Canadian society. The only ones who have not done anything about it or do not seem keen on it are the Liberals. They are continuing the same flawed, paternalistic, colonial based system that has been the bane of aboriginal people in the country. No matter how many reports come out saying the system does not work they continue to plow down the same route.

It is easy to celebrate immigration as a cornerstone of Canada. The NDP motion talks about restoring respect for diversity. I do not see any lack of respect for it. Canada is a shining example of respect for diversity. We do not have a 100% success rate but there will always

Supply

be flaws in any human based system. In Canada there is broad respect for the diversity in our midst.

There is broad understanding of the need for a good and well managed immigration system. The problem is in achieving the good and well managed aspect. The minister is proposing retroactive changes to the immigration system that would make it almost impossible for people to get into Canada based on the merit system. One would be more likely to get in by going to people smugglers and slipping them the right amount of money than on one's own merits.

That is a shame because Canada is understandably proud of its immigration system. Our nation is built on immigration. All of us who are not aboriginal have immigrant backgrounds. The system needs to be celebrated but it also needs to be fixed. The government would do well to concentrate on that.

I will talk about 3 of the 12 proposals the NDP has brought forward in its 12 point plan. Point number 1 says we should:

Enhance Canada's environment, including a national implementation plan for reducing green house gases, and ratification of the Kyoto protocol—

The proposal is half right. There is broad consensus that Canada should be a leader in reducing greenhouse gases. There is broad acceptance at both the provincial and industry level that reducing gases and pollution is a good idea. It is a good idea not only for health reasons and because we want to do our part. It is a good economic idea. Time and again it has been shown that a clean environment and clean industry is in everyone's interest in the long run. It is in our health interests, it is in the interests of long term sustainable development, and it makes good fiscal sense.

Simply ratifying the Kyoto protocol sometime this year is not the answer. Ratification of the Kyoto protocol in 2002 is part of the motion but I cannot agree with it.

From the day our representatives went to Kyoto we have asked the minister to tell us what his targets are and how he would achieve them. We have asked him to tell us on a sector by sector basis how the protocol would work and what role he sees the provinces playing. We have asked if the provinces agree to it and how it would work for them.

Are we putting so much emphasis on cleaning up greenhouse gases that we are ignoring other forms of pollution? Those who say we could dam rivers and produce clean hydroelectric power are missing the point. We would not have greenhouse gases but we would flood valley basins and displace people in those areas. It would cause other ecological problems. Sure, hydroelectric power could reduce greenhouse gases but it is not as simple as that.

No job analysis of the Kyoto agreement has been done by the government. There is no detailed, sector by sector analysis. There are no numbers. The minister says it would cost \$500 million a year. Industry says it would cost 450,000 jobs. The Prime Minister says he rejects all those numbers but cannot provide any numbers himself.

Supply

•(1300)

The Prime Minister has not put anything on the table about a cost benefit analysis and how it is going to work or how he got the provinces to buy into it, or how industry will play out. He has not put anything on the table indicating how it will affect our relationship with the Americans.

Nothing has been done on the government side. To ratify Kyoto without any of the facts, if it is not a recipe for disaster, at least it is a recipe for a severe problem between federal and provincial jurisdictions and industry that will hopefully drive us toward economic recovery.

I would also like to talk about the trade agreements. The sixth point states:

Ensure all trade agreements include adequate protection for labour standards, and for human rights and the environment.

This is a longtime NDP wish list.

We should ask ourselves if we are committed to free trade as a principle. The principle of free trade is a sound one. A rules based trading agreement between us and any other country, and certainly between us and the United States is necessary if we are going to have a chance of seeing Canadian concerns addressed in an international forum. Rules based trading is key to our future prosperity.

I want to ring the alarm bells. For the past five years we have watched the Liberals sleepwalk into a potentially disastrous situation which is now facing the country with regard to our softwood lumber industry. We have had five years of advance warning that the softwood lumber agreement will expire. What has the government done during those five years? It has told us not to worry, be happy, that the agreement will be settled well ahead of time. We are now three weeks away from the expiration of the deal.

From coast to coast our softwood lumber industry is being seriously affected by the duty put in place by the Americans. The Prime Minister told us last fall that it would be settled by Christmas. He then told us it would be settled by the expiration date of the agreement. He has been telling us that he is confident it will be done by March 21. Now he is hopeful it might be done. He now says the issue will be taken to the WTO. Maybe the government will take it to NAFTA. Maybe the government does not have a clue what it is going to do about the softwood lumber issue, the most serious trade agreement problem this country has.

Thousands of people have been displaced out of the industry from coast to coast. In my province 20,000 have become unemployed. There is no plan to address their immediate concerns. There is no plan to address industry concerns. There is no plan to address concerns from coast to coast on a file that the government has mismanaged for five long years.

A rules based trading agreement only works when everybody agrees to play by the rules. I do not think the Americans are playing by the rules. The Prime Minister and the international trade minister are also not doing their part by not raising the priority of this issue to the highest level possible or putting as much emphasis and as much time into the softwood lumber problem as was put into the last trade mission to Russia. As much as we would like to expand our trade

with Russia, and as good as it might be, the total trade in all products in one year with Russia is not 10% of our softwood lumber industry.

Does the government have a trade mission going to Washington to sit on the doorstep and solve this problem? Not a chance. The government put it on the back burner, wishing and hoping and pleading that something may happen. If wishes were horses, beggars would ride. The Liberal government has not done what it takes to get this issue settled. It will come back to haunt the government as it is already haunting the Canadian industry, one of the most important export industries in the land.

Hip, hip, hurray to the hon. House leader of the NDP with respect to the last point in the NDP proposal dealing with modernizing the democratic system. Right back to when he was a keen member of the McGrath commission, back in another era almost, the House has repeatedly said that we need to modernize, we need to democratize, we need to get parliamentarians back on the top of the ladder instead of at the bottom of the pile.

Canadians will applaud us for every effort we make to encourage democratizing this place. I certainly encourage the last point. It is an excellent idea. There is no shortage of ideas, but what there is a shortage of is willpower in the Prime Minister's Office to make it happen. Let us proceed with that last point post haste.

•(1305)

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I begin on a positive note by welcoming the hon. member's support of the 12th point in our plan which calls for parliamentary and electoral reform. I have had an opportunity to work with him and others over the years to try to secure various forms of parliamentary reform.

Although we have not had an opportunity as parliamentarians to seriously look at electoral reform, I hope that someday we will. I recall asking the Prime Minister a year or two ago if he would consider forming an all party committee to look at electoral reform and he rejected the matter out of hand. There is a great desire on the part of Canadians to think differently about how our electoral system works and whether or not if it was reformed it could create parliaments which were more representative of the views of the Canadian people both nationally and regionally.

I was interested in the member's remarks on Kyoto. I can understand the concern to know what the costs of implementing the Kyoto accord would be. What I do not understand is this one-sided fixation on what the costs of implementing Kyoto would be and why there is no complementary attention being paid to the costs both nationally and globally of not implementing and ratifying Kyoto.

The member is not an unintelligent member of parliament. Surely he does not belong to that camp which rejects the whole theory of global warming and climate change. If he is, then it is a whole different conversation.

However if he regards that as a fact and something we should be concerned about, why is he not on his feet like we are, calling on the government to produce the studies that show the costs of not implementing and ratifying Kyoto? It would seem to me that ultimately in a global sense, not necessarily in a national sense, the price of not dealing with climate change could be greater than anything we could measure in terms of traditional economic indicators.

Would the member join with us in asking the government to produce the figures as to what not ratifying Kyoto would cost?

• (1310)

Mr. Chuck Strahl: Madam Speaker, I would join with the member in saying that all of us would like to see any figures from the government on any impact of Kyoto. The problem with Kyoto is some people see it as a panacea.

I would argue with the NDP that the problem with standing up every day with the one-sided argument that it will all be death, destruction, hellfire and brimstone if we do not approve Kyoto is not viable. To say that if we just reduce greenhouse gases everything will be fine does not look at the other side of the equation.

I mentioned earlier that we could reduce greenhouse gases significantly. We could dam the Fraser River for example and not burn as much fossil fuels and have nice clean hydroelectric power, but at what cost? We would kill the river. We cannot just say it is a net gain. There are tradeoffs.

The government has given us no figures on the impact on employment, the impact on sectors, or the impact of not doing it. It does not have a clue. As near as we can tell, the government has signed it as a publicity stunt or a general acceptance that we should all be more environmentally concerned. That is easy to agree with. It is not good enough as a government to just say it has not done any cost analysis one way or another, or no environmental analysis, that it just kind of agrees with it and it may cost \$500 million and 450,000 jobs a year. That is not good enough.

To approve Kyoto we should have hard facts on our side. I agree with the House leader of the NDP that if we can have hard facts on how much damage it would do not to approve Kyoto, let us see those too.

As near as I can tell, the Liberals created this whole thing on the back of a cigarette package on their way over to Kyoto. They did not have a clue what they were negotiating when they went there. They came back without a clue on how to implement it. They have no idea how much it is going to cost. They just wanted to sign it. No one else would do that.

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to speak to the motion brought forward by the NDP caucus today having to do with saving Canada as a sovereign nation and strengthening our distinctive contribution to the world. In doing so our motion calls on the government and calls on Canada to adopt our 12 point plan to save Canada. I would like to go over as many of the points as I can.

Madam Speaker, I will only have 10 minutes because I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle.

Supply

The first on our list is to enhance Canada's environment, including a national implementation plan for reducing greenhouse gases and the ratification of the Kyoto protocol in 2002. This is something that has been debated today. It is one of the things that has caught the attention of the House.

Unfortunately, it has been a debate primarily among the NDP, the Alliance and the PC/DR coalition caucuses as to the wisdom of ratifying the Kyoto protocol. The NDP has been arguing that the costs of not ratifying are more significant and salient than the costs of ratifying, which the Alliance and the PC/DR coalition regard as more significant and salient.

I would like to make the point one more time that in our view, there are costs to pay in not ratifying Kyoto, both environmentally and politically. That is to say in terms of impeding whatever momentum there may be now for ratifying the Kyoto accord and for arriving at global environment solutions, there are political costs to pay as well as an environmental cost.

We do not believe that this would be a panacea, as we have been accused of believing, but that it would be a first start, a small baby step. We realize in some ways how insignificant Canada's contribution to this can be arithmetically. However Canada's contribution to this could be quite significant politically by helping to create the momentum by which some day even the United States may feel that it has to ratify the Kyoto accord.

We would like to strengthen the role of aboriginal, Metis and Inuit people in the Canadian family. A good place to start would to implement the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples that reported several years ago. This is an outstanding injustice. It is an outstanding inadequacy in our national life. The sooner we get around to addressing it the better.

I would have thought that the government may have wanted to support it. I understood at one point that the Prime Minister regarded this parliament and this mandate as a time in which he would address it, but since September 11, it appears that it has disappeared off the Liberal radar screen.

We would like to reaffirm Canada's international peacekeeping role and rehabilitate Canada's reputation as respected internationalists. This refers to the way in which, in our view, the Canadian government, in dealing with the war on terrorism, in participating in the international military coalition led by the United States and in a variety of other ways, has not respected international law and has departed from Canadian tradition. We would like to see that tradition reaffirmed and respected.

We talk about re-establishing the federal government as a full partner in funding health care and post-secondary education as public not for profit systems. If there is one social reality with which Canadians identify as being a particularly Canadian social reality, a particularly Canadian value system, it is the value system we find incarnated in our health care system.

Supply

That health care system is at risk, as are so many other things we have regarded as distinctly Canadian over the years. They are at risk partly because of inaction on the part of the Liberal government, particularly on health care. They are at risk because of the Liberal government's withdrawal from the full federal-provincial partnership that medicare once was. They are at risk because of an unwillingness on the part of the government to consistently stand up for Canadian values in the global marketplace, whether it is the pressure to Americanize or privatize our health care system, the pressure on the wheat board or on the various other ways we have decided to do things differently.

● (1315)

We have decided to do things not just differently but better in my judgment and I think a lot of Canadians share that judgment. We are saying that Canadians want to preserve what is distinct and what, in our judgment, is better about the way Canadians have decided to organize their economic and social lives.

We want to implement a comprehensive strategy for the eradication of child poverty. This is something that the parliament of 1989 committed itself to in the fall of that year. Yet here we are two years after that year, the year 2000 being the year by which child poverty was to be eliminated, and child poverty is no where near being eliminated. We say it is about time we declared the equivalent of war on child poverty. It could be by federal-provincial strategies. We can do it in a co-operative federalist way. We do not have to offend Bloc sensitivities or anyone else's sensitivities, but we have to get serious about eliminating child poverty.

We need to ensure that all trade agreements include adequate protection for labour standards, human rights and the environment. Ever since the implementation of the free trade agreement in 1988, the NDP has been concerned about the role that these free trade agreements have had on eroding Canadian identity and Canada's ability to control its own economic and social destiny.

The model that was imbedded in the free trade agreement then went on to be replicated in the NAFTA, the WTO and now stands to be replicated in other agreements reached at the WTO under the rubric of the GATS, and perhaps a new agreement on investment somewhat like the MAI that was proposed but then did not make it. In our view all these things are a way of elevating property rights, investors rights, corporate rights over the rights of ordinary people to decent labour standards, to a clean environments and to control over their own lives through their respective democracies.

At the heart of the matter for us is the conviction that free trade agreements, as they are now constructed, are constructed in a way to limit the power of government and of democracies to seek the common good and to protect the public interest. We will not rest until we have multilateral trading rules which are just that, trading rules, but not rules which trump the rights of labour, the rights of the environment and the rights of national legislatures and subnational legislatures to act in the public interest.

We talk about enabling primary producers and Canadian farm families to compete with foreign subsidies. As a country, we need to decide if we want to protect and enhance rural Canada. Are we willing to pay the price? Other countries are. We cannot just keep lecturing other countries about their policies and how damaging they

are to Canada. We need to decide ourselves whether our farm communities and our agricultural economy is something we want to preserve and protect and we need to pony up and pay to ensure they are protected.

Instead we have a government that has left our agricultural sector much more unprotected than even international agreements require. In fact, it has used international agreements as a cover for withdrawing even more support from our agricultural sector and from our farm families and communities than it was required to. We say that has to end.

We talk about rejecting continental energy and water policies that endanger Canadian control over natural resources. We all know they are acting in their own self interest. There is nothing particularly demonic about it, but the Americans would like to have a continental energy and water strategy, to the extent that they do not have one already, that would make it possible for them to exploit at will and without restriction our energy and water supplies.

I am sure the member who follows me and others may well speak about some of the things that are left like reaffirming fair taxes, celebrating immigration as a cornerstone of Canada, restoring respect for diversity and humanity in our immigration policies and strengthening our cities. Our cities are deteriorating. The Liberals are fiddling while literally our cities deteriorate before their very eyes.

We should be strengthening pluralistic and democratic discourse by means of appropriate regulation to limit media concentration in the country.

● (1320)

I remember appearing before the Kent commission 20 years ago. We were concerned about media concentration then. It looked like decentralized, scattered ownership compared to what we have now. Yet the government does not seem to be concerned.

Finally, I end where I began with respect to reforming parliament and the electoral system so that the House can be more representative of the views that Canadians actually hold so that we would not constantly be a prisoner of Liberal inaction and Alliance fearmongering.

● (1325)

Mr. Svend Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Madam Speaker, just last month I was in Pôrto Alegre, Brazil, with some 50,000 people around the world who gathered under the theme that another world is possible. Certainly the motion which my leader has put forward on behalf of the New Democrat caucus today calls on Canada to play a leadership role in helping to make that other world a reality. Another world is not only possible, it is absolutely essential at this time.

Supply

I commend the hon. member for his speech. Could he elaborate on the issue of democracy itself and the loss of democracy in the face of so-called trade deals. It seems more and more that we as democratically elected representatives at all levels of government, national, provincial, local and regional, are being told that we cannot make decisions in the best interests of our constituents and the environment because of some chapter or some section in some trade deal that has nothing whatsoever to do with trade and everything to do with entrenching corporate rights and corporate power.

I specifically refer to chapter 11, the investor state provision of NAFTA. He has been here since 1979, as I have, and has played an important role in that struggle for democracy. Could he comment on the role of members of parliament and other elected representatives confronting these trade deals that effectively seek to strip away more and more power from elected representatives.

Mr. Bill Blaikie: Madam Speaker, the hon. member and I could reflect together on the various ways in which the role of members of parliament, and the role of parliament itself, has been eroded since we arrived here in 1979.

Many are the things that the parliament we first sat in could have considered as legitimate policy options, which are now proscribed and prevented by various regional and global free trade agreements. These are policies having to do with protection of culture and magazines; policies establishing and maintaining a generic drug regime; policies on regulation of the environment; and policies, if we believe the Liberal government, with respect to whether or not we can institute a national ban on the export of bulk water. The list goes on of things which the parliament that the member and I sat in 1979 and in 1980 had power over and that this parliament no longer has power over because of the WTO and because of NAFTA.

Anyone who is concerned about democracy, and I invite my friends on the right wing of the political spectrum to consider this, should be concerned about this erosion of the power of the people's elected representatives.

We often hear them going on about how the supreme court is somehow eroding the parliament. However it is okay to lose power to the WTO, which does not judge things according to all the criteria that a supreme court judge would, but only judges things on the basis of whether or not they impede trade, and generally that amounts to whether or not they impede the profit strategies of global corporations. It is not okay for the NDP. That is what unites all the people who are concerned about the current corporate globalization model.

We know that the world is a smaller place. We know that we live in a global village. We were using this kind of language long before the right wing ever picked it up and used it as a cover for reducing the world to a global marketplace or a global flea market instead of a global community. We know that language. However we hate to see that language be perverted.

What unites people on the streets of Seattle and Quebec City as well as in parliaments around the world is the concern that control of our social and economic lives is being abdicated to unelected bodies, unelected bureaucracies, which administer so-called multilateral trade rules that are designed by and for large corporations.

It is a form of corporate rule which we reject and which we think the Canadian people reject, particularly when they see that this kind of corporate rule is systematically eating away at everything they value about being Canadian. Whether it is their health care system, their agricultural system, their cultural industries and so on, all these things are being attacked by this economic fundamentalism that we see enshrined in the WTO and elsewhere.

● (1330)

Hon. Lorne Nystrom (Regina—Qu'Appelle, NDP): Madam Speaker, the fundamental issue facing parliament is the sovereignty and independence of our country and what has happened to erode that sovereignty and democracy in the last 10 or 15 years.

When I travel across Canada I hear this raised by more and more people. I also see the pride of Canadians. Look at how proud we were when we won all the gold, silver and bronze medals at the Olympics. Canadians want to remain Canadian and have a distinct entity. However, we see the erosion of our sovereignty.

We have a government across the way that has sat idly by watching that sovereignty erode. We have a government across the way that is now actively talking about in some cases using a common currency, the common dollar. The former chair of the finance committee used to speculate about this quite often. The premier of Quebec has talked about a common currency. Now the chair of the finance committee is in the cabinet being rewarded for those kinds of views. We have members of the Alliance Party talking about maybe the possibility of a common currency.

It is about time we started raising these issues. The Minister of Finance tries to pooh-pooh this as a really serious discussion in the country. We now have the governor of the Bank of Canada saying that in five or ten years there may be integration to the effect where we would start talking about a common currency. The previous governor of the Bank of Canada, Gordon Thiessen, did not talk that way at all. He said no to the idea of a common currency. If we lose our currency we lose our country. If we lose our currency we lose our sovereignty. That is why this is a very important issue.

I fear the Minister of Finance pooh-poohing the idea. I remember back in 1984 or 1982 when Brian Mulroney was running for the leadership of the Conservative Party. At that time he took a very strong stand against free trade. I remember John Crosbie was very much in favour of free trade. I remember Brian Mulroney saying in response to a question by John Crosbie that free trade with the Americans was like going to bed with an elephant. "It may feel very warm and snuggly, especially on a winter night, until the elephant has a nightmare and rolls over and out you are gone".

About two years later after he became Prime Minister, Mr. Mulroney went to Quebec City and met with Ronald Reagan. They came out on a balcony singing *When Irish Eyes are Smiling*. Everything had changed and we got the free trade agreement. The same thing will happen here unless we alert the Canadian population to the fact that this increased continentalism and integration with the United States will lead to a common currency, to the end of our country and to the loss of our sovereignty.

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A common dollar in this country does not mean a new currency with the United States. A common dollar means the use of the American currency. It is not like Europe where the common currency is the Euro, with 12 of the 15 countries in the common market now using it. There is a Bank of Europe. There is an institution called the European Parliament which is the authority in terms of the Euro.

In this case, because the Americans are much bigger than us, the common currency would be the American dollar. The authority would be the federal reserve in the United States, answerable to the federal reserve and answerable to Congress in the United States of America.

Not only will it be the American dollar, but we will see also the privatization of the currency as well because the Bank of Canada, the Bank of England and most central banks are publicly owned. In the United States the federal reserve is privately owned in the shelters of the big banks on Wall Street.

This is the way we are going as a country. That is why it is important we put on the agenda today a debate about the very sovereignty of Canada and where we are going as a country.

In the 1980s Brian Mulroney became prime minister and made that great flip-flop from being worried about free trade to being an advocate of free trade instead of fair trade. They implemented the free trade deal and since that time we have lost some 13,000 companies in this country. Most of those 13,000 companies have been bought out by Americans. Among them are some very well known Canadian companies in terms of institutions.

I think in British Columbia, the big Canadian company of MacMillan Bloedel was sold to Weyerhaeuse a while back. Tim Hortons sold to Wendy's, the American company. Shoppers Drug Mart is gone to an American company. Gulf Canada Limited, which is the largest gas and oil company in this country, has now been sold to the Americans.

Laura Secord chocolates, a great Canadian institution, was sold to the Americans. Then we have the Montreal Canadiens.

[*Translation*]

The Montreal Canadiens, that great Canadian institution in la belle province, the team of Maurice "Rocket" Richard, has been sold to the Gillette Company of the United States.

• (1335)

[*English*]

We saw the sellout of the CNR and pretty soon it will be the CPR.

The sellout of the Canadian economy goes on and on. As more money moves out of the country and more investment is placed into tax havens, more money will be drained out of the country and the Canadian dollar will become weaker. Canadian companies are selling their businesses at fire sale prices because of the value of the Canadian dollar and the weakening of the fabric and sovereignty of the country.

When we lose our economy, we lose the tax base we need for strong social programs like health care, public education and other social programs that are so extremely important. This is a very important issue.

When the president of the Royal Bank, Gordon Nixon, spoke in Regina last October he said that over the last two and a half years some 20% of the publicly traded companies in the Toronto Stock Exchange had been sold and most of them to the United States. He also said that of the 35 gas and oil companies on the TSE gas and oil index, some 23 had been sold over the last two or three years and mostly to the Americans. He also said in that speech that when we have the sellout of many large companies and corporations, we have the hollowing out of corporate Canada and the relocation of head office and R and D jobs into the United States of America.

If we go into a recession or have a slowdown in the economy and a company has to make a decision about closing a plant, where does it close the plant? It is not in the United States. It is in Canada because we have a branch plant economy. A good example is the very profitable Ford Motor plant in Oakville. It is being closed down because Ford does not close down American plants, it closes down plants in this country.

This is a big issue but where is the nationalist wing of the Liberal Party? Where is the Walter Gordon wing of the Liberal Party? Where is the Herb Gray wing of the Liberal Party from many years ago? Where is the Lloyd Axworthy wing of the Liberal Party from many years ago?

I see the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance across the way from the Toronto area. I remember a few years ago he was a great Canadian nationalist who was concerned about the sovereignty of the country and a strong economy. I want him to get up in the House today, endorse this motion and exercise some concern about the sovereignty of our country to build a strong Canada for each and every Canadian.

This is a very important issue. It is fundamental. What has happened to our country over the last 15 years in terms of the lack of sovereignty and democracy is a real scandal and a real shame. We have now lost many of the powers we used to have as a parliament.

The member for Winnipeg—Transcona said that the things we could legislate when he came here in 1979 we cannot legislate today. That is very true. Many things back in the 1960s and 1970s, let alone in the 1950s and so on, that were under the purview of a national parliament, have now been transferred to international bodies. However in the transfer of that power to those international bodies we have seen a lopsided transfer. It was basically a transfer of rights for the investor through large multinational corporations. We have no counterbalancing in the vision of globalization and rights for the ordinary working people of the country or indeed around the world in terms of minimum labour standards and rights, rights to collective bargaining and the ability to organize. There are no environmental standards and no standards in terms of health and social programs.

If we are to have a vision of globalization that is balanced for the ordinary people of the country there has to be something there for the common good of ordinary folks. That is what this debate is all about.

Today it is all a lopsided battle. We are seeing that in every aspect of globalization. It is all about profit for large multinational corporations. Let us take a look at currency. Today over a trillion dollars is exchanged in the world in terms of currency markets each and every single day. About 90% of the exchange of currency in the world is done solely for reasons of speculation. The big investment banks are speculating on very small margins with over a trillion dollars a day which creates nothing productive whatsoever in terms of jobs and benefits for ordinary people. It is hard to imagine how large a trillion dollars a day is yet we have a Minister of Finance who is not raising these issues in a very forceful way in the international community.

● (1340)

These are big issues and they are important. As the member from Burnaby said, we passed my private member's motion a couple of years ago to endorse the idea of a Tobin tax, which was a small tax on the speculation of currency. We should be taking it to the world forum and pushing it with all our might.

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle for his comments. It is a shame that the hon. member only had 10 minutes to deal with the very comprehensive action plan put forward by the NDP. The plan has as a vision to save the very nation state of Canada as our sovereignty is eroded bit by bit and inch by inch.

I know the hon. member is well known around this place and around the country for the work he has done to strengthen the whole democratic and electoral process. He has asked for either parliamentary reform in the House of Commons or electoral reform. He has challenged and wants to revisit the way we elect politicians, and has introduced the concept of proportional representation.

Would the hon. member expand somewhat on how that would enhance democracy and the sovereign state of Canada?

Hon. Lorne Nystrom: Madam Speaker, that is a very thoughtful and insightful question and one that is extremely important to our sovereignty and electing a parliament that is a reflection of all Canadians.

We need serious parliamentary reform. In terms of reforming this institution, too much power now rests with the Office of the Prime Minister and far too little power with parliamentary committees and ordinary members of parliament. When we talk about parliamentary reform, we should also reduce the power of the PMO to call an election whenever it wants. We need fixed election dates and fixed budget dates.

We should take away the power the Prime Minister's office has for nominations and for nominating committee chairs. We had a big crisis in the finance committee last week where the finance committee wanted to elect the member for Etobicoke North as the chair. We have nothing against the current chair but we had interference from the whip of the Liberal Party in terms of imposing the will of the Prime Minister's office according to Liberal members of parliament on the finance committee. We need serious parliamentary reform.

On the electoral side, we need electoral reform. This parliament does not reflect at all how the Canadian people voted. Forty per cent

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of the people voted for the Liberal Party and it has 60% of the seats in the House of Commons. That happens time and time again. In fact we have had very few majority governments elected by the majority of the people.

Most countries in the world do not have our kind of electoral system. In fact if we look around the world, only three democracies use our first past the post system, and we are talking of democracies with more than eight million people: India, the United States and Canada. We saw what happened in the United States in the election a year ago in November. Al Gore got 550,000 more votes than George W. Bush. Who is the president of the United States? George W. Bush. We have those distortions in every first past the post system.

What we are suggesting is that we strike a parliamentary committee that will look at aspects of proportional representation so that when people vote in election campaigns their vote will count, that no vote is wasted, and every vote is counted equally, so if a party gets 10% of the votes in the country it would get about 10% of the seats in the House of Commons; if it gets 20% of the votes it would get 20% of the seats in the House of Commons.

We have to move that way in terms of making people involved in the electoral process. The turnout is plummeting. In the last campaign only 61% of the people voted. In the campaign before that it was 67%. Back in the 1960s and 1970s it used to be 75% or 80% of the people. People are disengaging from the process.

We need political reform in terms of parliamentary reform and political reform in terms of electoral reform so that everyone is equal, everyone's vote counts and no one's vote is wasted. That is part of saving our country and part of renewing Canada.

Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, an interesting thought occurred to me about proportional voting. In my riding I got just over 10 times as many votes as the NDP candidate. It occurred to me that someone one-tenth my size probably could represent the NDP and it would work fine.

I have a question with respect to size, that is, the Canadian dollar. The member in his speech decried the fact that Canada has been sold at fire sale prices. That is because of the fact that our dollar has so eroded. The fact is that our dollar is a measure of our productivity and our productivity is down the tubes. He never mentioned a thing about how to improve productivity in this country, which is the real cause, I believe, for the fact that our dollar is so low. What is his comment on that?

● (1345)

Hon. Lorne Nystrom: Madam Speaker, productivity is important and to increase productivity we need to put more money into research and development, into education and into training, an area where we have fallen down in the past. There has been very little in terms of innovation and productivity is extremely important.

We must also build and strengthen our economy. Part of the reason the dollar is down is so much is that our economy is being sold out. Billions and billions of dollars are leaving the country each and every day. All these things come together toward the depreciation of the Canadian dollar. Productivity is certainly one of them but it is not the only factor.

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Mr. Bryon Wilfert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak today on the motion tabled by the New Democratic Party urging the government to reflect on the budgetary policies as put forth in a 12 point plan.

First, I would like to mention that the concern about Canadian sovereignty is not confined simply to that side of the aisle, and particularly that corner of the Chamber. I would hate to think my friend across the way would try to misrepresent me in any manner. What he said is very true. I am a very strong supporter of the protection of Canadian sovereignty.

I would like to refer to some points that are specifically germane to the motion but, most important, I would like to point out to the members of the New Democratic Party that many of the points they have raised have already been implemented and are already in place.

One of the priorities of our government has always been to listen to the concerns of Canadians and their priorities. In any policy initiative we undertake, we will always consult with Canadians. The new excise act which was introduced in the Chamber is a prime example of that sort of consultation.

The caucus task force on agriculture, which is consulting on new agriculture policy, is another example. Above all, we consult on budgetary policy. We always conduct prebudget consultations before the Minister of Finance brings down any budget. As a result, our government's budgets contain measures that not only reflect the priorities of Canadians but are measures that can be implemented within the fiscal framework in a fiscally affordable way. Perhaps that is why our government has been so successful with its budgetary policy since 1993. The elimination of the massive deficit that faced us in 1993 is the prime example.

Let us look for a moment at some of the points in today's motion. The government's most recent budget back on December 10 addressed many of these points. The NDP calls for the government to enhance Canada's environment. Let me remind the House that since 1994 our government has introduced numerous tax measures pertaining to the environment, including the introduction of and improvements to class 43.1, which provides a 30% capital cost allowance rate on equipment that uses renewable or alternative forms of energy or meets certain efficiency criteria. We have expanded the eligibility for accelerated CCA rates to encourage investments related to the product use of flare gas at oil and gas wells. We have enhanced incentives to invest in renewable energy through the introduction of the Canadian renewable and conservation expense and the use of flow-through shares. We have removed the income limit on the use of the charitable tax credit for donations of ecologically sensitive land for conservation purposes, which I know many members of the House supported.

We have also introduced qualified environmental trust rules to support the maintenance of funds designated for certain types of site reclamation activities. Our recent budgets have provided more than \$1 billion in new funding to further Canadian environmental objectives.

I will be splitting my time, Mr. Speaker, with the hon member for York West.

In the December 2001 budget, the government introduced a production incentive for wind energy and is making additional contributions to the green municipal enabling fund and the green municipal investment fund. We also expanded eligibility for accelerated CCA rates to encourage investments in small hydro projects and the productive use of blast furnace gas.

The December budget also extended the existing intergenerational tax deferral rollover of farm property to apply to commercial woodlots where the activities meet the requirements of a forest management plan. These measures all support Canadian environmental objectives.

The NDP has also called on the government to strengthen the role of aboriginal, Metis and Inuit people in the Canadian family. I urge hon. members to think back to the agreement of the first ministers signed in September 2000 on health and early childhood development. I hope they have not forgotten about that very important accord. As part of that agreement to foster early childhood development, provinces will include measures to reduce the incidence of fetal alcohol syndrome. The 2001 budget provides additional funding to intensify efforts on reserves to reduce the syndrome and its effects. Funding will be increased tenfold by \$25 million over the next two years.

● (1350)

Some children face special learning challenges in school because of physical, emotional or developmental barriers to learning. This can include the ongoing impacts of fetal alcohol syndrome and fetal alcohol effects. To support children living on reserve with special needs at school, the 2001 budget increases funding by \$60 million over two years.

As for the Canadian family in general, I hope the opposition has not forgotten the enrichments we have introduced to the Canadian child tax credit and the child tax credit changes we have implemented to help low income Canadians. Have they forgotten the tax measures we introduced to help Canadians with disabilities?

The government especially has a social conscience. The NDP wants to talk about eradicating child poverty. The government's initiatives having been designed with that goal in mind, the NDP clearly has not been listening.

Our government's commitment to tax reform remains a priority, particularly tax assistance for low and middle income Canadians. Indeed, we have provided major stimulus through lower taxes. In budget 2000 we introduced the largest tax cuts in Canadian history and in October 2000 we accelerated that plan. Last year, lower taxes put \$17 billion back into the pockets of Canadian families and businesses. This year the value of the tax cuts will grow to \$20 billion. This is a significant stimulus and is already working its way through the economy.

Another part of the NDP's plan concerns helping primary producers and Canadian farm families compete with foreign subsidies. Need I remind hon. members about the caucus task force on agriculture which has been working for months on the new agricultural policy? It is currently working on its interim report.

As for agricultural initiatives, over the past three years significant relief has been provided to farmers, with some \$2.9 billion in disaster assistance since 1999, and it will continue to be provided. The government has allocated \$500 million for next year for the Canadian farm income program, which will provide support to those most adversely affected by the drought. Moreover, the 2001 budget commits the government, led by my colleague, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, to continue to work with the provinces and territories, the agricultural sector and Canadian consumers to develop a new, integrated and financially sustainable agricultural policy for the 21st century. The federal government is committed to providing its share of the predictable and long term funding needed to support this new approach.

I would be remiss if I did not focus for a minute on point number eight of the NDP plan. It wants to strengthen Canadian communities with sustainable funding and strategic infrastructure investments. As hon. members know, the government's long term goals are to build a strong economy and secure society and to improve the quality of life for Canadians. The strategic investments in the 2001 budget help achieve these objectives by dealing with today's needs and bridging to a better tomorrow. The modern economy of the 21st century requires a backbone of sound physical infrastructure to sustain the nation's growth and indeed our quality of life. Canada must have the physical infrastructure it needs to succeed.

Previous budgets allocated funding to improve municipal infrastructure. In particular, the 2000 budget introduced the Infrastructure Canada program. To meet the needs of additional support for large strategic infrastructure projects, the government is creating the Canada strategic infrastructure fund with a minimum funding of \$2 billion as set out in the 2001 budget. This new fund will complement other federal infrastructure initiatives such as the program I have just mentioned.

Working with provincial and municipal governments and the private sector, the Canada strategic infrastructure fund will provide assistance for large infrastructure projects in areas like highways, rail, local transportation, tourism, urban development and water and sewage treatment. Investments in these projects will stimulate job creation and confidence in the short term and make the economy more productive and competitive in the long term. I trust that my colleagues understand the implications of that.

I could certainly go on to deal with other areas but I think it is clear that the government, in these areas alone, has been addressing the issues raised by my colleagues on the other side of the House and I would therefore urge my colleagues not to support the motion before us.

• (1355)

Ms. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to respond to the NDP's 12 point program.

It is quite clear when it talks about saving Canada that it was the Liberal government elected in 1993 that approached its avenues to

Supply

do exactly that and it started out by sending the Mulroney government packing. It was the Liberal government and the hard work of all Canadians that saved Canada from the \$42 billion budget deficit that was left by the Tory government which included the current leader of the fifth party in the House today.

We saved billions of dollars in interest payments. With budget 2001 we brought down our fifth balanced budget, a first in 50 years. That is a major accomplishment for any government. We are forecasting balanced budgets or better for the two following years through to 2004. Canada will be the only G-7 nation to balance its books this year. Again, these are major accomplishments.

We made sure Canadians could save and take home more of their income. Canada has implemented the largest tax cut in its history, through which personal income taxes would fall on average by 35% for families with children.

In 2000 the Government of Canada announced that the general corporate tax rate would be reduced from 28% to 21% by 2004. Corporate tax rates would fall about 5% below the average of U.S. rates.

When we talk about who is saving Canada the Liberal Party of Canada and the present course that we are on would indicate how we propose to save Canada and ensure that we have the right plan, agenda and vision.

In particular to the 12 point plan to save Canada which is the new NDP platform I would like to speak about number 8 which talks about strengthening Canadian communities.

In our red book and in the throne speech we talked about establishing a dialogue with urban regions to look at how we could work better as a federal government with our cities. Cities are the product of the provincial governments and not directly under the responsibility of the federal government. As a federal government we are looking for a role to play. We established a dialogue. The Prime Minister established the urban caucus task force in May of last year made up of a cross-section of members of our party throughout the country.

We have toured eight specific urban regions. We have consulted with over 400 people. We have talked to academics, to professionals and many people about what the role of the federal government should be when it comes to our urban regions. Clearly this country is truly blessed with having such fine people in it, people who are so committed to this country that makes us all very proud to be Canadians.

S. O. 31

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[Translation]

PIERRE DEUTSCH

Ms. Yolande Thibeault (Saint-Lambert, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I wish to bring to the House's attention today the extraordinary volunteer contribution made by a man in the riding of Saint-Lambert, Mr. Pierre Deutsch. He was recently on a volunteer assignment to Poland under the auspices of the Canadian Executive Service Organization to help a company examine the advisability of expanding its facilities.

During that assignment, he reworked their financial controls, reviewed quality control and helped in the hiring of new employees who had been through a retraining program. The outcome: tests proved that the products manufactured by the company rated higher than those of its competitors. The company's relationship with its main client was thus improved.

Mr. Deutsch is highly qualified to take an active part in Canada's efforts to encourage the development of disadvantaged economies. He has been doing so for a number of years.

Congratulations to this exceptional volunteer.

* * *

• (1400)

[English]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mrs. Carol Skelton (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, the human resources department service centres are receiving a failing grade from the very people they are there to serve, the unemployed Canadian workers.

I was contacted recently by an Ontario individual who found it necessary to apply for employment insurance benefits. According to HRDC personnel there was a waiting time of least six weeks. It was their busy time. This individual asked department personnel if there was any way to speed up the process. He was told to go to the local welfare office to apply for benefits.

It is a scary time for Canadians when their government's policy is to offload the unemployed onto provincial social assistance. The EI surplus is nearing \$40 billion and unemployed Canadians are being forced onto welfare. Canadian workers are in need of an employment insurance system that works. How long will they have to wait?

* * *

[Translation]

GRAMMY AWARDS

Mr. Gérard Binet (Frontenac—Mégantic, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to extend my congratulations to all the Canadian singers, musicians and composers who were nominated for Grammys at the 44th annual Grammy Awards last evening.

It was an exciting evening for Nelly Furtado. She received nominations in four major categories and won for best female pop vocal performance. Some 1.7 billion people watching the evening

live heard her perform her song *I'm like a bird*. Cellist Denise Kajokic also performed.

Joni Mitchell received the Lifetime Achievement Grammy. This is the first time a Canadian musician has been awarded this recognition for his or her important contribution to the music industry. Joni is a singer, a songwriter and a painter. She has more than 20 albums to her credit and has been a presence in the Canadian music world for more than 30 years.

Please join with me in congratulating all of our Canadian musicians on their success at the Grammy Awards.

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[English]

UNCLE TOM'S CABIN

Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, Lib.): Madam Speaker, on the occasion of Black History Month I wish to pay tribute to a community that has made an invaluable contribution to the development of Canada and to recognize the efforts of individuals such as Josiah Henson who helped slaves escape the United States via the underground railroad to Canada.

Josiah Henson and his family escaped via the underground railroad after 41 years of slavery and came to Canada to start a new life. In 1841 he moved his family to Dresden and helped establish the Dawn Settlement to provide a refuge and a new beginning for former slaves. Josiah Henson's name became synonymous with the central character, Uncle Tom, in Harriet Beecher Stowe's famous novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

This year is the 150th anniversary of that novel. In order to celebrate this momentous occasion special events are being arranged throughout the year at Uncle Tom's Cabin located in Dresden, Ontario in the riding of Lambton—Kent—Middlesex. This historical site provides visitors with known facts and education in the lives of fugitive slaves in the Dresden area.

I welcome all members of parliament and all Canadians to visit Uncle Tom's Cabin historic site to discover the history of African settlers in Canada.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Ms. Paddy Torsney (Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, March 8 is International Women's Day, a day to celebrate and remember the contributions of women around the world and at home in Canada.

Canadians are particularly focused this past week on our fine Olympic athletes: Catriona LeMay Doan, Jamie Salé, Cindy Klassen, Clara Hughes, Becky Scott, Veronica Brenner, Deidra Dionne and our national curling and ice hockey teams. These are fine examples of great Canadian women getting out there and doing amazing things.

In Burlington I will be hosting our 6th annual International Women's Day breakfast. The guest speaker is Jill Davis, the editor in chief of our local newspaper. Her success as a journalist is sure to inspire the audience which will include 18 young Canadian women from local high schools.

Through events like this I hope to help encourage and inspire the next generation of women, the future leaders of Canada and great Olympic champions.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Friday, March 8, is International Women's Day. That day was first celebrated in 1914 to promote women's efforts to gain the right to vote.

In Quebec, it was in 1971 that the first rally related to International Women's Day took place. On that occasion, people marched to allow women to have access to legal and free abortion, as demanded by the Front de libération des femmes.

In 2002, this day is an opportunity to reflect on the social, economic and political demands of women throughout the world.

Even though women can now vote and get an abortion, there are still many issues to be raised on March 8 of each year. Ensuring equal pay and decent parental leave, and following up on the demands of the world march of women are all measures that the federal government has refused to take.

The Bloc Québécois wants to pay tribute to the women who have built and who continue to build Quebec every day.

* * *

• (1405)

[English]

HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES

Ms. Judy Wasylcia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, some of our most vulnerable citizens, the children of Canada, are the victims of dangerous toxins in pesticides. Proportionally children ingest more pesticides than adults. These pesticides are found in the food they eat, the air they breathe and the lawns and ground they play on.

Like arsenic in pressure treated wood, mercury in fish and toxic chemicals in plastics, pesticides pose an enormous danger to the health of our children.

We have long had scientific proof that 40 different kinds of pesticides interfere with the development of children's bodies for years. Yet what do we get from the government? Nothing but inaction and broken promises. It failed to keep its promise to table new legislation to replace the Pest Control Products Act of 1969.

New Democrats today join with Canadians everywhere to demand that the government deal with this important issue with the urgency it deserves and act immediately to introduce effective pesticide rules to protect our children.

As children's entertainer and health advocate, Raffi has said "If children had a say, this would have been done by now."

S. O. 31

ORTHODOX THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE

Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to bring to the attention of the House an international campaign the objective of which is to reopen the Orthodox Theological Institute in Halki, Turkey.

For those who are unaware of this most important initiative the Orthodox Theological Institute on the island of Halki was closed by Turkish authorities in 1971. This institute was previously a monastery founded in 837 AD and was converted to a school in September 1844. It became a very prominent establishment responsible for the theological training of many eminent scholars of the Orthodox faith. The theological institute is an historic site, unique and an invaluable part of world culture and of course, Orthodox Christian religion.

It is therefore very important that the Canadian government and all citizens, both here and abroad, support the reopening of the school in Halki. We must urge the Turkish government to respect the international democratic principle of freedom of religion and reopen the Orthodox Theological Institute in Halki. It is the 21st century; it is the right thing to do.

* * *

LIBERAL PARTY

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, PC/DR): Mr. Speaker, on International Women's Day how does one solve a problem like Maria? The Prime Minister must be singing that in his sleep. It is a sound of music all right but not the one he wants to hear.

The girls in the Liberal caucus are obviously getting a little upset and the boss is in trouble. Kicking them out of cabinet does not seem to work. We know which gender usually gets the last say there. Sending minions from the office to do the dirty work does not impress either.

The member for Beaches—East York said she listened to the PMO and will not make that mistake again. Another Liberal MP is quoted as saying that all Liberals are whining a lot in this town and morale is very low in caucus right now.

Poor things. Imagine, gender wars right in that friendly, feel good, 1960s Liberal caucus, that bastion of freedom and equality. We will all be interested to see how tough the Prime Minister really is as more of the girls go after him. I wish him luck. He will need it.

* * *

IMMIGRATION

Mr. Paul Forsyth (New Westminster—Coquitlam—Burnaby, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration has finally admitted that he is in political trouble and that the government has botched the new rules for immigrants.

Independent adult applicants who applied before December 17, 2001 will now have the old rules applied until January 1, 2003. These applicants will be at the mercy of the speed of the bureaucracy to get the paperwork done. If the slow administration does not work by January 1, 2003 then the new rules will apply to the backlog, but the bar will be set at 70 points under the new rules instead of the intended 80 points.

S. O. 31

There are literally thousands of backlogged applications due to continued under-resourcing of a swamped bureaucracy. The public reaction to the practical consequences of the regulations has generally been very negative. In contrast, the Canadian Alliance is committed to providing a simple credible system that the public can understand and politically support.

The system lets in possible terrorists but screens out university graduates with fine reputations. This whole mess reveals that the Liberals cannot manage the public interest.

* * *

●(1410)

TRADE

Mr. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we welcome President Katsav of Israel on his first state visit to Canada reflecting the close and friendly bilateral relationship between our two countries—nurtured by strong political, economic, juridical and cultural ties; the shared values of two parliamentary democracies; multicultural societies and nations of immigrants; mixed legal jurisdictions of civil and common law; and each undergoing a constitutional revolution with the adoption of charters of rights and with trade based economies offering unlimited partnering opportunities and export potential.

President Katsav's visit coincides with an important anniversary, the fifth anniversary of the Canada-Israel free trade agreement which has been an undisputed success for both Canada and Israel. Bilateral trade has doubled. Canada's exports to Israel have grown more than 30% and in 2001 two way trade exceeded \$1 billion for the first time ever.

As we look ahead to the next five years, we are confident that the Canada-Israel free trade agreement will continue to serve as a powerful tool for increased trade and investment which are the lifeblood of our economy and an important source of jobs for all Canadians.

* * *

[*Translation*]

COMMUNITY RADIO

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ): Mr. Speaker, CIBL-FM, Montreal's francophone community radio, is a non profit organization that has been on the air since April 26, 1980. It plays a key role within Montreal's community. CIBL-FM has an audience of over 200,000 regular and occasional listeners, and some 800 members.

Over 150 young and not so young people do volunteer work as technicians, producers, talk show hosts and journalists, or they help out with all kinds of jobs that need be done to broadcast the 70 programs that make up the programming of this community radio station, the only one of its kind.

Unfortunately, CIBL is currently experiencing serious financial difficulties. Therefore, I am urging all our fellow citizens from the greater Montreal area to attend the mega benefit show organized to save CIBL. This event will take place on March 1, at Montreal's Medley. I also encourage Montrealers to take part in the benefit activities that will take place throughout the spring.

[*English*]

MATHIEU DA COSTA AWARD

Ms. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to announce to the House that one of my constituents, Ms. Erin Braun Janzen of Robert H. Smith School in Winnipeg, who with others is on the Hill today, is a proud recipient of the Mathieu da Costa Award. This award is given out to nine Canadian students in recognition of Black History Month.

Although one winner, Elaine Deng, was not able to be present today, Erin was joined by Sarah Vollett, Heather Macarthur, Stéphanie McCuan, Alison Taylor, Jordan Pinder, Michael Ratushniak and Carolyn Young at the Museum of Civilization this morning where they were presented their awards by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for International Cooperation.

The Mathieu da Costa challenge gives students across the country the opportunity to learn about and showcase the contributions of aboriginal peoples and Canadians of all ethnic and racial backgrounds to the building of this country. Through their writing and their art they tell the achievements of those people whose efforts are not well recognized in Canadian history.

Erin wrote an important paper entitled *David Toews—a Man of Faith* telling of his efforts to support the immigration of Mennonites to western Canada in the 19th century.

* * *

2002 WINTER OLYMPICS

Mr. Randy White (Langley—Abbotsford, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I stand in the House today to tell Canadians how proud we in Abbotsford, British Columbia are of Alanna Kraus.

Alanna is an Olympic bronze medal winner in the 3000 metre speed skating relay. Imagine, third in the world. I will not stop there. Alanna competed in the 500, 1000 and 1500 metre races and placed fifth, sixth and eighth in the world. Alanna is not just a speed skater she is a leader, a role model and a fine example of a great Canadian dedicated to her goals.

I congratulate Alanna, her friends, her family and coaches for doing such an outstanding job in the Olympics. I assure her that all Canadians wish her the very best in her future challenges.

* * *

CANADA STUDENT LOANS

Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's West, PC/DR): Mr. Speaker, the government's commitment to post-secondary education has been abysmal. Young people all around the country are stuck with huge student loan repayments. HRDC collection services are now imposing setoffs on individual tax refunds due to people defaulting on their Canada student loans.

Oral Questions

I have been informed that a decision will be made after an individual collection agency makes the recommendation to the Canadian student loan group. If a person's income covers basic necessities CSL will not remove the lien. Real hardship must be demonstrated. Single mothers who live below the poverty line are told they will not qualify for an exemption.

The agency works on a percentage so it will try to get as much as it can. People are not even considered because they have car loans or whatever. Their income tax will be clawed back. People who depend on this money for such things as buying beds for their children are told they will not get it. CSL will claw it back.

* * *

•(1415)

[Translation]

SUDDEN INFANT DEATH SYNDROME

Ms. Hélène Scherrer (Louis-Hébert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week, the CBC reported that researchers at Toronto's Sick Children's Hospital had published a study pointing to a link between sudden infant death syndrome and secondhand smoke.

Researchers examined the lungs of 44 infants who had died of SIDS and the lungs of 29 other infants who succumbed to other diseases. The study showed that the SIDS victims had higher concentrations of nicotine in their lungs, even when parents said they did not smoke in the home.

Researcher Dr. Koren says that this study is biochemical proof that cigarette smoke is associated with SIDS, which, in Canada, claims as many as four of every 1,000 newborns.

This is why the Bureau of Reproductive and Child Health of the Laboratory Centre for Disease Control has set up the Canadian Perinatal Surveillance System. This system is part of Health Canada's efforts to strengthen Canada's national health surveillance capacity.

Although the number of SIDS deaths continues to decrease in Canada, I take this opportunity to urge members of the public to stop smoking in order to improve their own and our children's quality of life.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. John Reynolds (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the government is blindly heading toward implementing the Kyoto treaty without any concern about what it will cost Canadian families in their everyday lives. In addition to the 450,000 job loss Canadian manufacturers warn that implementing Kyoto would cost the average Canadian double for electricity, 80% more for gasoline and 60% more for natural gas.

How much more does the Deputy Prime Minister expect Canadians to pay to finance an agreement that will do little to improve our environment?

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition has failed to understand that the studies upon which the report for the manufacturing association based itself were done before the American decision with respect to Kyoto and before the Marrakesh agreement.

There are new studies coming out which have been jointly prepared by federal, provincial and territorial officials with the assistance of the private sector. We expect further information in approximately a couple of months. I suggest that he waits until we get that information before continuing with these scare stories in the House.

Mr. John Reynolds (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate he calls the Canadian Manufacturers' Association scare-mongers, but let me quote from the government's own reports, Industry Canada's reports that state Kyoto will cost Canadians up to \$75 billion in lost revenue and tens of thousands of jobs. That is the government, yet the government has no detailed plan for implementation, no proof it will work and no guarantee the U.S. will enact it.

The natural resources minister, the minister's colleague, said "I wouldn't sign a contract in business unless I knew exactly what it meant", but that is exactly what the government is doing.

Will the environment minister still insist on ratifying the Kyoto treaty if it means losing hundreds of thousands of jobs in Canada and forgoing millions and billions in lost revenue?

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. Leader of the Opposition has once again misrepresented a study done for the industry department.

It is a working paper. It is working paper number 34. There are 33 others before it. It states "If such a domestic implementation scheme is adopted, the cost of compliance for Canada is estimated to be modest". It goes on to state that "If the Kyoto Protocol is implemented with significant international trading, the important negative sectoral impacts largely disappear".

That is the study he is quoting from.

Mr. John Reynolds (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the minister is just great at picking out his quotes.

Let us talk about a letter he wrote to his cabinet colleagues, urging them to use electrical or natural gas powered vehicles as their ministerial cars to set an example for Canadians on Kyoto.

I understand that none of them have acted on his request. The Liberal government talks the talk but will not drive the drive.

Oral Questions

How can the Prime Minister or the Minister of the Environment expect Canadians to sacrifice so much for the sake of Kyoto when their own ministers will not even trade in their taxpayer funded cars for environmentally friendly vehicles?

• (1420)

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am surprised at the hon. Leader of the Opposition who follows the leader of the opposition who was first here in the Reform Party and who played such a hypocritical game with respect to government supplied vehicles, to raise the point that he too has a government car and it too is not a hybrid vehicle.

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of the Environment should also know that when our present leader was minister of the environment in B.C. he drove a natural gas car and that he has sent a formal letter requesting an environmentally friendly car here, which has not been acted on.

The Prime Minister apparently is not aware of the difference between pollution and greenhouse gas emissions regulated by Kyoto. Kyoto is about reducing CO₂ levels. Canadian sources of air pollution, CO₂ emissions, can be removed much less expensively than by Kyoto.

Why is the government committed to using the political approach—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of the Environment.

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will certainly look into the issue of the hon. Leader of the Opposition's car, but the trouble is they rotate through that chair so quickly it is extremely hard to keep track.

With respect to the natural gas that is being discussed on the other side, admitted on the other side, perhaps, I can tell the hon. member that in fact there are a number of greenhouse gases. I believe the generally accepted number is six of which CO₂ certainly is one.

Kyoto is designed to deal with basically CO₂ and other greenhouse gas emissions.

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the government seems to think that climate change on the prairies is due to increases in CO₂. Let me provide some facts.

Records show that the driest five year period in southern Alberta was from 1906 to 1910. The driest 10 year period in the last hundred years was from 1903 to 1913.

If Sir Wilfrid Laurier had signed a Kyoto type of accord in 1910, does the Prime Minister really believe that these droughts would not have happened?

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's question illustrates the problem the Alliance Party has with the Kyoto accord. We are dealing in the Kyoto accord with a global problem, but of course only a small part of one province is what he thinks about. He cannot see a global problem beyond a small part of one province.

Whatever might have happened in 1912, and the member might have been in the House at that time but I certainly was not, I can tell him now that the consensus of scientific opinion is that this century has been the warmest century of the millennium. The last decade was

the warmest decade of the century, and 1999 and 2001 have been the warmest two years.

* * *

[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, we learned that a Department of Foreign Affairs representative, who was present at the Tampa Bay command centre, had known since January 25 that Canadian troops had captured prisoners in Afghanistan.

Does the Minister of Foreign Affairs stand by his version that he and his department did not learn until January 29 that prisoners had been captured?

[English]

Hon. Art Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I understand that in the passing of information on January 29 to the command centre, perhaps additional information was obtained by the foreign affairs representative on that occasion.

[Translation]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I was addressing the Minister of Foreign Affairs. I was talking about one of his subordinates. The Minister of Foreign Affairs told us that he heard about this on the 29th. We now know—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe: If he would listen to me instead of repeating the Minister of National Defence's answer, it would be more helpful.

We are now told that it was January 25. I put the question to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who said in the House that it was only on the 29th, not the 25th, that he learned of it.

• (1425)

[English]

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, I understand the leader of the Bloc Québécois is dealing with an item that is before a standing committee of the House. It is my understanding that a full explanation with respect to that matter was provided to the committee today and the matter was entirely cleared up.

[Translation]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am referring to a statement made by the Minister of Foreign Affairs here in the House. I know that there is a cover-up, but the Minister of National Defence and the government House leader are the ones answering.

I am addressing the individual who was recently appointed. Surely one of the things he was appointed to do was answer a few questions here in the House. My question for him is this. It was here in the House and not in committee that he told us, "It was on January 29 that I and my department learned that Canadian troops had taken prisoners in Afghanistan". Now, we are told that a Department of Foreign Affairs representative knew this on the 25th.

Oral Questions

Will he rise in his place and say something?

[English]

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, I invite the leader of the Bloc Québécois to refer to the proceedings of the standing committee that is dealing with this matter, where he will find an entire explanation of the situation to which he refers. It is in the minutes of the committee.

[Translation]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I remind the government House leader that I am referring to a statement made here in the House by the silent Minister of Foreign Affairs, the one who thought he was so smart and who is now hiding.

Does he still stand by his statement that it was on January 29 that he and his department learned that Canadian troops had taken prisoners in Afghanistan? Has he had the time to think while three others answered before him? Will he have an answer? I am talking about a cover-up.

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I stand by the statement I made to the House earlier, as the member said.

* * *

[English]

EQUALIZATION PAYMENTS

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance.

I am sure the Minister of Finance would agree with me that the federal government should not act in a way that causes fiscal instability in the provinces. Recently announced changes to the equalization formula pose that very serious threat to a number of provinces. The province of Quebec, for instance, has expressed concerns.

Is the Minister of Finance prepared to review the changes to that formula, given the serious impact it would have on some provinces, with a view to either changing them or ameliorating them in some way so that fiscal stability in the affected provinces can be maintained?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has raised a number of very important questions.

We have decided to ask the provinces to meet with us as to whether methodological changes when brought in should be brought in either in the middle or only at the end of the term. Statistics Canada has also said that important methodological changes will not be introduced unless there has been a full consultation with all of the provinces concerned.

Under these particular circumstances it would appear that a full consultation was not held. Under those circumstances, we have decided to spread this out—

An hon. member: Time.

Hon. Paul Martin: This is important, Mr. Speaker, but I will answer in the supplementary.

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, perhaps the minister could have answered were it not for the Tory yelling behind me.

Perhaps the minister could finish answering the question but also speak to the problem Manitoba finds itself in. It also has to do with fiscal instability brought about by the accounting error on the part of the federal government.

Will the Minister of Finance commit today to act in a way to ensure fiscal stability in Manitoba? Manitoba stands to be very seriously affected by an error of the federal government.

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will complete the first part of my answer. It is the government's intention in terms of the first question to suspend any negative consequences of Statistics Canada's result for a period of a year so full consultations can take place. At the same time we are going to implement the positive consequences of that for those provinces concerned until such time as the final decision comes down.

As far as the other comment, the Tories are always behind the member.

* * *

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, PC/DR): Mr. Speaker, the immigration minister does not seem to have a handle on his department.

First, immigration documents go missing from the minister's office giving hundreds of people virtually unfettered access to Canada. Second, ministerial permits vanish from five of his offices. This amounts to a virtual get into Canada free card. Third, the auditor general tells the government that the immigration system is rife with bribery, theft and incompetence. Now we find out that official papers have been bought in Canada and sold in countries around the world. The minister's response was he cannot be bothered to do an investigation.

What kind of disaster is it going to take in the immigration department before he cleans up the abuse?

● (1430)

[Translation]

Hon. Denis Coderre (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course we take the issue of security extremely seriously. When we heard that documents had been stolen, we looked into it and we increased our document security. We are taking the matter extremely seriously.

However, it is also important to mention that when there are serious allegations regarding criminal offences, we call in the RCMP. That is what we did.

[English]

Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, PC/DR): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister in his role as chairman of the cabinet committee on security.

Oral Questions

The minister has had many meetings with Tom Ridge, the U.S. secretary of homeland security. During these discussions, concerns have been raised about Canada's immigration system. While the government pays lip service to correcting these security problems, it refuses to take action.

Since the minister of immigration seems unconcerned about this latest serious breach of the immigration system, will the Deputy Prime Minister use his clout at the cabinet table and in the special committee to ensure that this abuse is finally stopped?

[Translation]

Hon. Denis Coderre (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find the hon. member's statements unacceptable. They are all the more so, given what we saw happen this morning. When asked, "Did you have any independent audits done regarding these allegations?", the former Prime Minister replied, "No, Mr. Speaker, I believed what was written in the newspapers".

We invested more than \$600 million over six years. We increased security and we took the required measures. This government is serious when it comes to matters of security.

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the government ignored its own officials regarding the stolen IMM 1000 immigration forms. Now they are being sold on the streets of Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Foreign bandits must be laughing up their sleeves when they think about our dim-witted boss at immigration who lets his department continue to use the same forms that are available on the black market.

Instead of sitting on his laurels while waiting for the new forms, will the minister of illegal immigration make an immediate commitment to abolish these forms and render them invalid?

Hon. Denis Coderre (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the illegal forms were the Canadian Alliance cards in the riding of Gaspé.

I would like to mention that we made decisions. We took action and when there were problems regarding the IMM 1000, we conducted audits. This is why I announced this week that we would be implementing Bill C-11 and the regulations, and that we were replacing the IMM 1000 with the maple leaf card to prevent this fraud. We are very much aware of the problem.

[English]

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the government should not give us any lessons on selling memberships, that is for sure.

IMM 1000 forms, the equivalent of green cards, are being stolen and sent to organized criminals in Pakistan and Afghanistan. This is another serious blow to the security of our country's immigration and refugee system. Technology was available to replace these forms in the 1990s but the minister plans to keep using the same forms.

Thanks to the minister's inaction, terrorist networks may be using these forged forms to smuggle people into Canada. Will it take a terrorist attack here in this country before the minister starts to act?

Hon. Denis Coderre (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the solicitor general who announced this morning that we are getting tough on cross-border crime because we are investing \$4.6 million at Cornwall.

* * *

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the employment insurance program severely penalizes hundreds of Quebec women who have taken advantage of preventive withdrawal under Quebec legislation, by depriving them of many weeks of benefits.

My colleague wrote to the Minister of Human Resources Development in this connection last August and received a reply in September.

Today, I am asking the Minister of Human Resources Development, who has been aware for more than six months that EI unfairly penalizes pregnant women in Quebec, how she can justify not having done anything to help them.

[English]

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member will know that this issue affects a small minority of women in Quebec. We are very concerned about the impact on these women.

The hon. member has referenced the fact that I have been in correspondence with the critic on this and he has been satisfied with the approach we are taking. We are working with the Government of Quebec to deal with this issue. I expect a resolution in the near term.

● (1435)

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, what the Minister of Human Resources Development needs to do is to make use of the provision in the Employment Insurance Act which allows her to transfer funds to a province when a program is already in place there in a given area.

That is what we are calling upon her to do, which would stop Quebec women from being penalized. This is what she ought to do, as a minister, as a representative of the people, and as a woman in particular.

[English]

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what we will do is find a reconciliation of this issue for the small minority of women in Quebec. It is important that they have access to the benefits and that their children benefit from them as well.

*Oral Questions***MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENCE**

Mr. Leon Benoit (Lakeland, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of National Defence admitted to reporters that he clearly knew about the capturing of prisoners by the JTF2 in Afghanistan the first time he was briefed, which was on January 21. Yet in spite of that, he still told the House that he first learned of this information on January 25. It is clear now that the minister misled the House of Commons and the Canadian people.

I ask the Prime Minister, which one of the many versions that his Minister of National Defence has given on this issue does he expect Canadians to believe?

The Speaker: That question is out of order.

* * *

[*Translation*]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Ms. Monique Guay (Laurentides, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I remind the Minister of Human Resources Development that Quebec women who are eligible to preventive withdrawal get 90% of their salary. By contrast, the federal program requires them to collect employment insurance benefits, which reduces the duration of their parental leave by the same period.

Does the minister realize that Quebec female workers who are on preventive withdrawal prefer to get 90% of their net salary from the CSST, like those who are covered by the Quebec labour code, rather than collect 55% of their gross salary, like those who are covered by the Canada Labour Code?

[*English*]

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what I know to be true is that Canadians are very supportive of the fact that the government has doubled parental benefits and we have provided a new opportunity for parents, whether it be the father or mother, to spend upward of a year with their newborn.

There is no question that if the Government of Quebec chooses to add to that program, it is welcome to do that. However, our approach has been to consistently improve the benefits for Canadian women and their families. This is another example of that.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Guay (Laurentides, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am talking about preventive withdrawal, and we have been talking about it for 10 years here.

In 1993, the leader of the Bloc Québécois proposed amendments to the Canada Labour Code to correct these injustices, and the Liberals, who were in opposition then, supported these changes. Now that they are in office, they are opposed to them.

Could the minister tell us why she is not correcting this injustice and why she is stubbornly maintaining two categories of female workers: one that is well covered by the Quebec labour code, and another one that is not so well covered by the Canada Labour Code?

[*English*]

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me remind the hon. member that it is

this government that doubled parental benefits for all Canadians. Let me reiterate that for the small minority of women in Quebec we will work with the government of Quebec to deal with the issue that has presented itself to ensure that they and their children have full benefits.

* * *

ZIMBABWE

Mr. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Liberal dominated subcommittee on human rights unanimously called for targeted sanctions against Zimbabwe, including suspension from the commonwealth, travel bans and a freeze of the personal assets of Mr. Mugabe and his cronies.

Will the government finally do the right thing and adopt the subcommittee's recommendations?

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we welcome the report of the subcommittee. Clearly this is a matter which is presently being discussed by the heads of the commonwealth. The Prime Minister left this morning. That matter will be discussed by the commonwealth heads.

The Prime Minister carries with him the authority and respect of the Canadian government. He has a lot of respect in that institution. I know that he will bring his pressure to bear on Mr. Mugabe and ensure that we have the best possible elections in Zimbabwe.

Mr. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, there is no respect. Our partners have moved ahead. The European Union has moved ahead. The United States have moved ahead. Other countries have moved ahead. The point is the election in Zimbabwe is already rigged. It cannot have a free and fair election.

My question is simple. Why does the government sit by impotently wringing its hands while state sponsored brutalization continues? Our partners have moved ahead. Why is the government not acting shoulder to shoulder with our partners?

• (1440)

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government has already taken action against the government of Mugabe. We have suspended all direct aid with the government of Mugabe. We have put it on a list in terms of giving visas to leaders. We have taken every action available to us under Canadian law at this time.

It will require a resolution of the commonwealth for us to do more. We will do more. We are working within the commonwealth, and we are working not to score political points but for the benefit of the Zimbabwean people by keeping commonwealth inspectors in place until the elections are over.

* * *

[*Translation*]

ALUMINUM INDUSTRY

Mr. Robert Bertrand (Pontiac—Gatineau—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Secretary of State responsible for the Economic Development Agency for the Regions of Quebec.

Oral Questions

For several days there have been reports in the Quebec daily newspapers of major investments in the aluminum industry in Saguenay—Lac-St. Jean, with reference even to an international strategy.

My question to the minister is this: What is the agency doing to support efforts to develop activities in the aluminum industry in this region?

Hon. Claude Drouin (Secretary of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Economic Development Canada has invested \$31 million in various projects, generating 728 jobs.

In addition, we were involved in the creation of the very first technological road map of the Canadian aluminum industry.

As well, in conjunction with NRC, we contributed to the creation of an aluminum technologies centre, an investment of close to \$52 million, which will provide employment for 80 researchers, and encourage secondary and tertiary processing.

* * *

[English]

BANKING INDUSTRY

Hon. Lorne Nystrom (Regina—Qu'Appelle, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. The CEO of the Toronto Dominion Bank had a salary last year of \$14.3 million and the CEO of Scotiabank some \$20.3 million, all of this at the expense of consumers who are being gouged by high service charges and high credit card rates. Now the banks are considering fees at ATM machines across the country.

On behalf of the people of the country, will the Minister of Finance call his close buddies at the big banks and tell them that enough is enough?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, the government has encouraged the widespread use of low cost credit cards which are available. We are also monitoring, through the protection agency, the kinds of fees that the hon. member is referring to and we will continue to do it.

If I could add a supplementary to the questions asked earlier by the member for Winnipeg—Transcona, I have been in extensive discussions with the minister of finance for Manitoba. We are continuing discussions and are seeking to find a fair and just solution.

Hon. Lorne Nystrom (Regina—Qu'Appelle, NDP): Back to the banks, Mr. Speaker. Further evidence that the consumer is being gouged is the CIBC report today that shows its revenue from retail banking, things like mortgages and credit cards, went up by 25% in the last year. Meanwhile non-retail revenue, things like corporate lending to Enron among other companies, actually went down. Consumers and bank workers are now subsidizing the CEOs.

In light of that, will the minister put his foot down and increase the capital gains tax on the excessive CEO stock options that are hurting the ordinary people of the country at the expense of Canadian citizens?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if I understand the hon. member's question, what he has said is that loans

to corporations have gone down and that is true. One problem is investments by companies has gone down. However, as we have seen by consumer spending, there is an enormous amount of consumer confidence, which may well be the reason for the numbers the hon. member has given.

That is probably why we saw this morning that Canada in the last quarter had a growth rate of 2%, which is substantially higher than the United States. In fact, we are doing quite well.

* * *

IMMIGRATION

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, PC/DR): Mr. Speaker, this morning there were serious allegations raised in *La Presse* about illegal use of immigration forms to run a human smuggling ring. This ring was first brought to the attention of the department last October. Maybe it takes three times for the minister to get the message because four months later there is still no action.

Has an investigation been started and who is in charge? The RCMP or immigration.

• (1445)

[Translation]

Hon. Denis Coderre (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think it is incorrect to say we have not done anything. Since September 11, not only have we had a security agenda, but we in Immigration Canada have focused our efforts on measures that do indeed keep these smugglers out of this country. We have done our job. We will continue to do our job, and we are looking to the future.

[English]

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, PC/DR): Mr. Speaker, I disagree. I do not think they have done their job. The deputy minister of foreign affairs came to our committee and testified that he still did not have enough money to fund and fill the hundreds of vacancies for our foreign service. These are the people that are on the frontlines of our security efforts around the world and the first line for immigration, but they just are not there.

Now today's revelation indicates problems in another department right here at home, with a serious situation in immigration.

How long will Canadians have to wait for immigration to put their people in place to enforce our laws?

Hon. Denis Coderre (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I totally disagree. First, I not only had the occasion to visit Paris and London, I also visited the Pearson and Dorval airports to ensure the frontline was working well. I can assure the House that not only are we doing what we have to do but security is also our number one priority on that level.

AIRLINE INDUSTRY

Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the \$24 air tax that will be implemented to finance \$2.2 billion in air security improvements, half of the \$2.2 billion will be used to buy bomb detection equipment. The government is paying 100% of the equipment costs up front in cash. If the government amortized the cost of the equipment over the equipment's life time it could cut the air tax in half. Why will the government not do it?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government follows the accounting rules established for governments by the auditor general. I am sure the hon. member opposite would want us to follow the dictates of the auditor general. This is what we are doing under these circumstances.

Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, dentists, chiropractors and small business owners amortize these kinds of costs over the life of the equipment's use. The government should do the same thing and give taxpayers a break. There is a one year backlog in buying this new equipment. The new bomb detection equipment will have a life expectancy of over 15 years.

Why will the government not amortize the cost of that equipment, give taxpayers a break, save small and regional low cost carriers from going bankrupt in small communities, do Canadians a favour and be fiscally responsible?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the doctors, dentists and chiropractors are not government. The fact is government is bound by the rules established by the auditor general.

What I would suggest is that he might well want to talk to his colleague, the chairman of the public accounts committee. If they are prepared to announce a change in accounting, I am sure we would be prepared to look at it.

* * *

[Translation]

AIRLINE INDUSTRY

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government intends to impose a tax on—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order, please. It is impossible to hear the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot. There is too much noise in the House. The hon. member has the floor.

Mr. Yvan Loubier: Mr. Speaker, the government intends to impose a tax on air transportation to finance airport security. Without any exception, all the stakeholders from the travel, tourism and transportation industry, not to mention those involved in regional development, expect devastating effects from such a tax.

Will the Minister of Finance get back into a better frame of mind and realize that he made a bad decision, an ill-advised decision, by imposing such a tax?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member opposite is suggesting that it is taxpayers at large who should foot the bill. We feel it is the users and those who will benefit from the services who should pay. We intend to proceed with a

Oral Questions

comprehensive review in the fall, when we know the direct impact of this measure.

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, will the minister realize that this is what he is doing right now?

He is making remote regions, the tourism industry and workers who are directly or indirectly connected to it and to air transportation pay. Such a tax will have a devastating impact. There is unanimity on this.

Will the minister realize that security concerns everyone, not just airline passengers and that, consequently, he could use a small portion of his huge surpluses to fund security?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member seems to ignore the fact that airlines will save \$72 million. They can use these \$72 million to lower airfares or take some other measure.

But the hon. member is saying that it is not users, but all taxpayers who should pay for this. Let us not forget that taxpayers are contributing in excess of \$5 billion for national security. We are asking users to pay \$2 billion.

* * *

● (1450)

[English]

AGRICULTURE

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, last year in the main estimates the budget of the department of agriculture was cut by \$470 million. This year another \$4 million has been cut from the agricultural budget.

Farmers have to deal with higher fuel and fertilizer costs, industry killing foreign subsidies, a major drought condition on the prairies and now they have to face a government that just does not care about them.

Will the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food stand up for farmers instead of allowing the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance to pull the financial rug out from underneath him?

Mr. Larry McCormick (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the main supplements show that the amount of money for Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada is the same as last year, less \$3.8 million. That is because of a sunset program to do with our dairy subsidies.

With regard to the weather, we certainly would all like more moisture in the west, but let us remind our farmers and our producers that again we have loans for our people, up to \$50,000 for individual producers, interest free. I advise these people of this and ask them to take part in that program.

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I was asking about a government that does not care about them. I was not asking a question about the weather.

Oral Questions

The numbers do not lie. They will be spending \$80 million more on the propaganda agency. They will be spending \$13,000 for every minister for their car and driver. They will be spending \$9 million, believe it or not, on an Internet cultural content strategy. However the farmers will get \$4 million less.

Does the minister of agriculture not think that the government's priorities are backward, that it has lots of money for spin and propaganda and no money to save the family farm?

Mr. Larry McCormick (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister of agriculture is in Halifax today with the Canadian Federation of Agriculture along with people from the other parties. Certainly last year \$3.7 billion was made available for family farms across this country.

I remind my hon. colleague that we will have programs of interest free money in the spring. We will again have programs of interest free money in the fall. This gives money available to farmers with no interest for up to 10 months every year.

* * *

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. David Pratt (Nepean—Carleton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, earlier this week I was joined by the Minister of Veterans Affairs and the Minister of National Defence in a very special event involving one of my constituents, Mr. Charles Craib, who received his war medals after 57 years.

Could the Minister of Veterans Affairs tell the House what advice he has for other veterans who may be in a similar situation of having earned war medals but never having applied for them or never having received them?

Hon. Rey Pagtakhan (Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, veterans who are entitled to service medals but have not received them may contact the Veterans Affairs Canada offices anywhere in Canada, as well as any veterans organizations. May I add to increase communication, we will be including this information in the upcoming issue of *Salute*, our new client newsletter.

May I commend the member for his initiative in helping his constituent secure this medal within a month of being made aware of the situation.

* * *

CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the auditor general tells us what western Canadian farmers already know and that is that the Canadian Wheat Board has serious management problems in its board of directors: it has performance problems; it has planning problems; and it has poor information management. If this happened in a business, heads would roll and changes would take place.

The minister responsible for the wheat board has had the report for some time. What is he doing to address, as the auditor general so delicately put it, "the significant deficiencies" found in the management systems and practices of the Canadian Wheat Board?

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, obviously I expect the Canadian Wheat Board to issue a comprehensive response to the deficiencies identified by the auditor general. I would like to quote a very important passage in the auditor general's report. It states:

—the CWB has a solid reputation as a strong and capable marketer of high-quality grains. Its key strengths include good intelligence and market information, well-developed annual sales strategies and plans, competent and tough negotiators, and good relations with customers...

* * *

● (1455)

[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Antoine Dubé (Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as the elections approach in Zimbabwe, human rights violations are on the rise.

At the same time as foreign journalists and observers are being expelled, the opposition leader, Morgan Tsvangirai is being accused of treason.

Can the Minister of Foreign Affairs confirm that the Prime Minister, who will be attending the Commonwealth meeting in Australia, will support Tony Blair and other members who are demanding immediate sanctions against President Mugabe's Zimbabwe?

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member and the House that the Prime Minister is in contact, not only with Mr. Blair, but with other Commonwealth leaders, including African leaders. They are putting pressure to bear so that there will be elections in Zimbabwe that respect human rights in that country.

I assure the House that at the Commonwealth meeting in Australia, the Prime Minister will act for the good of the Commonwealth and for the good of the people of Zimbabwe.

* * *

[English]

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mrs. Elsie Wayne (Saint John, PC/DR): Mr. Speaker, the government intends to close the office of the Bureau of Pension Advocates in Calgary in March. The clients of this office include the military, the military veterans, the RCMP and their veterans, and their families. Veterans groups have not even been consulted.

In the case of the Calgary office, the size of the clientele is extremely large and it warrants and justifies continued service.

Could the Minister of Veterans Affairs advise the House how the closure of this office can be justified?

Oral Questions

Hon. Rey Pagtakhan (Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Veterans Affairs Canada takes the issue of our veterans and their entitlement to pensions very seriously. We will see to it that there will always be pension advocate offices for them wherever possible .

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CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the auditor general also stated in her report that the roles and responsibilities of the Canadian Wheat Board's directors and management were not clearly defined.

The Canadian Wheat Board minister claimed that he fixed everything in 1998 when he established a board that included ten elected and five appointed directors, but clearly this has not occurred and the audit proved it.

How can the Canadian Wheat Board minister claim that the elected directors are running the Canadian Wheat Board when they do not even know what their job is?

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 legislation is very clear in establishing the responsibility of the directors in a modern corporate context. The process has been ongoing for the last several years in terms of the transition from the old governance structure to the new governance structure.

The audit from the auditor general has been helpful in defining the way ahead for the future. I fully expect the directors of the Canadian Wheat Board to file a complete and comprehensive response to the important comments that have been made by the auditor general. That is the directors' responsibility.

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[*Translation*]

GAMES OF LA FRANCOPHONIE

Mr. Robert Lanctôt (Châteauguay, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Quebec has already committed to \$2 million for the infrastructure needed for the Games of La Francophonie, to be held in Rivière-du-Loup in the summer of 2002.

In the meantime, the federal government, whose idea these games were, has still not committed a single cent, despite promises to that effect by the Minister of Immigration, Secretary of State for Amateur Sport at the time.

Is the federal government finally going to announce its infrastructure contribution so that the Games of La Francophonie can be held in adequate sports facilities?

Hon. Paul DeVillers (Secretary of State (Amateur Sport) and Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the federal government is proud to be contributing \$900,000 towards the Games of La Francophonie.

We are proud to do so and we are pleased to see that the Province of Quebec is going to contribute towards infrastructure, but Sports Canada is not in a position to provide infrastructure funding.

[*English*]

EDUCATION

Mrs. Bev Desjarlais (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the finance minister has announced that he intends to change the GST act retroactively so that he does not have to repay 100% of the GST rebate paid by school boards on school bus services. The money that the finance minister wants to keep from the school boards should be going to teachers, textbooks and computers.

The federal court ruled against the minister. Why is he changing the law to get around the court decision and squeeze every last cent he can get out of the school boards?

• (1500)

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what has been done is a clarification of the act. The understanding has been very clear since the very beginning of what the intent of the act was and how it was to be applied. We understand that the bus sector of the school boards do receive a very substantial rebate. That rebate continues and in fact it is most deserved.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's West, PC/DR): Mr. Speaker, a few years ago the St. John's weather office was closed and services were moved to Gander. Now the Gander services are being downgraded as a cost saving measure, according to officials.

Does the minister responsible realize the significance of this service to marine safety, storm tracking, air travel, et cetera? If so, what will he do about it since it affects the traveller, the tourist, the fisherman, the hunter and, in this case, even the baker?

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the issue of safety is foremost in our minds when we are dealing with climate and meteorological services. We are trying to establish the most efficient and effective system we can across the country.

I can assure the hon. member that no official has been authorized to make any statement with respect to changes at Gander because I have made no decision on whether there should be changes made in that or many other cities where we now have forecasting offices.

* * *

AIRLINE INDUSTRY

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the government's new \$2.2 billion tax on air travel will devastate air competition in this country. The Canadian Chamber of Commerce estimates that the \$24 return tax could reduce passenger loads by 6%. That is WestJet's profit margin gone.

The finance minister says that he will do a six month review. How can he guarantee us that it will not in fact be a six month post mortem on WestJet and air competition in Canada?

Routine Proceedings

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the fact is that the Alliance has consistently advocated user fees as opposed to tax increases. Why all of a sudden is it having a change of heart?

The fact is that of the \$7.5 billion national security cost, the taxpayers of Canada are absorbing over \$5 billion. We are asking those who benefit the most from air services to pay for those air services. We are prepared to review the situation again in the fall.

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BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Randy White (Langley—Abbotsford, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the government House leader about the business for this week and next week. I would also like to ask him to tell the House when the national sex offender registry legislation, which was committed to us by the solicitor general, will be tabled in the House.

[Translation]

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, tomorrow, we will take up report stage of Bill C-49, the Budget Implementation Act, 2001. Next week is constituency week.

[English]

When we return on March 11 we will resume consideration of Bill C-49 dealing with budget implementation. I would note that in the week we return, Tuesday, March 12 and Thursday, March 14 shall be allotted days for the opposition.

With respect to the specific question raised by the House leader for the opposition party, I will of course consult with the solicitor general and provide what information I can.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

QUESTION PERIOD

Mr. Leon Benoit (Lakeland, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, my point of order arises out of a decision you made in question period to rule my question out of order.

Mr. Speaker, I hold you in high esteem and I have a great deal of respect for you. You have served the House extremely well. However I would like to ask you to review the decision you made on my question based on the following information.

In the committee, which is dealing with whether the minister deliberately misled the House, the chair has said again and again that the issue before committee is whether the minister deliberately misled the House. It is not whether he misled the House. The minister has in fact admitted that in the House.

Mr. Speaker, I would like you to review the mandate given to the committee and review the question that I asked today. I deliberately stayed away from saying that the minister had deliberately misled the House. If after that review you find that my question was in order,

could you give me an opportunity to ask my question again next Thursday?

• (1505)

The Speaker: He can ask it next Thursday to his heart's content but I am afraid we will not be sitting so it will be tough doing it here.

I hold the hon. member in very high esteem too. I do not like to rule questions out of order but I have made it fairly clear in other rulings on this subject, and I have had a couple of them. I gave a caution on one and I ruled the other one out of order, I believe, on this subject in earlier question periods.

When a matter is referred to a committee and the committee has the matter under consideration, our rules are quite clear. I could cite Marleau and Montpetit once again on this point to relieve the hon. member's mind, but I will find that and bring it out to him later if he would like to see it.

Questions about what the committee is studying are not in order. He may have an argument whether the committee is studying deliberately misleading, misleading or whatever, but the statements that the Minister of National Defence made in the House were referred to the committee for its study. The matter is before the committee.

In the preamble of the question, the hon. member cited the minister's statements in the House. His question was based on those statements. Those statements have been referred to the committee and are being studied by the committee. In my view, questions on that subject while the matter is before the committee are out of order.

I have no doubt that the committee will, in due course, submit a report to the House on this matter. Once that report is submitted there is no doubt in my mind that the hon. member's question would be in order. However at the moment it is not and that is the problem.

I will review the matter with care and if I come to a different conclusion, naturally I will invite the hon. member to take his place in the House and ask the question again. The Chair was fairly careful in listening to the hon. member and I felt that the ruling at the time was appropriate in the circumstances given the position I took on this matter previously.

[Translation]

I very much appreciate the hon. member's support and his cooperation with the Chair.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Geoff Regan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think you would find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development be authorized to travel to Vancouver, British Columbia, from March 12 to 16 in relation to an upcoming conference presented by Globe 2002 entitled Globalizing Business... World Marketplace for Environmental Solutions.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY—BUDGETARY POLICY

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Ms. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to resume debate on the New Democrat Party's 12 point solution to save Canada. As I indicated before, I am quite confident Canada does not need to be saved because of the work our party has done in a variety of areas.

One area I have been working on at the request of our Prime Minister concerns our red book commitment to strengthening our cities. We recognize the challenges cities face given amalgamation. Cities throughout the country have been under many pressures. We all recognize that cities are the front line in delivering a variety of necessary services. They are struggling to meet those needs. We are trying to sort out where we can fit in and be of assistance.

One of the things that has clearly emerged in our travels has been what a great country we have. People are proud to be Canadian. The talent we have in Canada makes us all proud to live in such a great country.

Along with other members of our task force we have established a dialogue with professionals et cetera throughout the country to talk about where the weaknesses and opportunities are. A variety of areas have challenges in them. I hope that through co-operation with governments and private industry we will meet the challenges before us when it comes to providing housing, transit and infrastructure. A variety of issues clearly need to be addressed in Canada. It provides a great opportunity for us to continue our work and look for opportunities to work in partnership with others.

When urban regions undergo stresses and strains as they do with amalgamation it puts enormous responsibility on them to deal with complex situations. They often cannot do it on their own and need the support of partners in government. In our role of working to see how we can strengthen our urban regions the opportunity presents itself to work with all parties involved to solve the problems cities are experiencing.

I will talk about the infrastructure needs of our cities. In Budget 2000 we committed \$2.65 billion to infrastructure. More than \$2

Supply

billion of it will go to municipalities for water, sewer systems and so on. These are major commitments that cost millions of dollars. Given the pressures cities are under it is difficult for them to do these things without partners coming to the table to help them.

The things we have done as a government clearly indicate our commitment to working with municipalities. The Kyoto targets are another example. With the consultations that are going on it will be our urban regions that have the opportunity to see them implemented.

There is also the issue of amateur sports. We were proud that the \$82 million we invested in amateur sports spelled out victory last weekend when Canada took home 17 medals. It shows the investment we are making in our young people, an investment that will ensure we have strong, dynamic urban regions and can go forward and build the country in a way we are proud of.

Immigration is another important issue for our urban regions. It has always been at the heart of Canada's social, cultural and economic fabric. Canada is a nation of immigrants. It is a destination of choice for people seeking a new and better life. This has been going on for more than 300 years. It is what built our country. The new immigration and refugee protection act would enshrine the principles of generosity and compassion toward immigrants and refugees while ensuring the security of Canadians.

One issue that has arisen is the need for skilled workers in Canada. We need skilled workers to continue to build apartments, industries, factories and so on.

We must also do what we can to meet the needs of an aging population.

I was pleased to see that one of the first things Minister Coderre has done is change the point system with respect to—

•(1510)

The Speaker: I think the hon. member was referring to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. I know she would want to refer to him by title rather than by name.

Ms. Judy Sgro: Mr. Speaker, I stand corrected. The new minister has clearly been listening with respect to the issues. He has made changes to enable us to meet the demands on us and go forward on the issues. I am pleased the government is responding to the pressures it is hearing about from cities regarding their need for help in a variety of forms.

I will speak to the issue of child poverty. Our commitment to children has been reaffirmed in every speech from the throne since the National Children's Agenda was announced in 1997. In the 2001 Speech from the Throne the government challenged Canadians, stating:

Now Canadians must undertake another national project—to ensure that no Canadian child suffers the debilitating effects of poverty.

To this end we have invested \$2.2 billion in the Early Childhood Development initiative which increased the child care expense deduction and the Canada Child Tax Benefit.

Supply

We are continuing our commitment to our country, our cities and our citizens. We are continuing to look for solutions to all the problems. Finding answers will not be easy. However as true Canadians who care about the issues we are setting out to find new ways of dealing with our cities and the stresses they are under, all the while respecting the constitution and working with our partners to achieve our goals.

I am grateful for the opportunity to speak to the issue today. We will go forward and build a country of which we can all be proud

• (1515)

Mr. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to split my time with my hon. friend from Skeena.

The NDP introduced a 12 point plan to save Canada. I compliment it for doing so. Contrary to my hon. colleague from the Liberal Party who said Canada did not need saving, it does. It needs saving in a big way. That is why we are here. That is why the government continues to put out nothing but pablum while we in the opposition continue to put out forceful, constructive, specific solutions to address the big problems affecting Canadians. That is what we are all about.

I compliment the NDP for introducing its plan to save Canada no matter how hopelessly misguided the plan is. It is unfortunate the NDP has not learned lessons from social democracies around the world. It continues to proffer solutions that have been rejected by great social democracies around the world including Sweden.

If adopted the NDP plan would turn our nation into a country that looked like Bob Rae's Ontario or Glen Clark's British Columbia. We know what a disaster that would be. B.C. is still trying to dig itself out from the hole and will be doing so for many years. Adopting the 12 point plan would ensure Canada became a needy backwater that would probably be on the IMF's list of countries that need transfers to survive. We do not want that.

The NDP and the government should listen to our party. For Canada to be saved it needs lower taxes, less regulation, a smaller and more efficient government, and above all else, democracy. The House needs a good strong dose of democracy. That is perhaps the one point the NDP, our party, all opposition parties and most members of the government could agree on.

The government is more interested in maintaining and acquiring power than using it for the public good. One need look no further than at what my colleague from Elk Island witnessed at the finance committee. He saw a disgusting display of anti-democratic behaviour when a private member's bill was gutted.

When members of parliament introduce private members' bills they must go through extraordinary hoops to get them into the House so they can be debated. The public would be interested to know that at the end of the day the government thinks nothing of whipping into line the Liberal committee members who form the majority. It does so to ensure bills emerge with nothing unchanged but the paper on which they were written. Not one original letter, period or word will survive in private members' bills that go to committee.

That is the ultimate violation of basic democratic rights. It violates the rights not only of members of parliament in the House but, more importantly, individuals who support their members of parliament. All members of parliament across party lines including members of the government suffer under the same draconian, fascist rules and regulations which are unwritten but are nonetheless applied by the government's leadership.

The Prime Minister's Office rules the government with an iron fist, not for the public good but for the maintenance and acquisition of power. The real tragedy is that all the fantastic ideas of people across the country both in and out of parliament cannot be brought to bear on the problems of the nation.

The public often asks why it is not seeing action on health. It asks why it is seeing more studies. Why does it not see action on the economy? Why has the dollar plummeted from 73 cents to 62 cents on the government's watch? Why is our military begging for soldiers? Why does our military lack equipment to do its basic work? Why does our government have discordant defence and foreign policies? Why does our government not have environmental policies that make any sense? Why does our government's environmental policies violate the laws that have gone before?

These are the questions Canadians ask. Because they have received no meaningful answers for the last eight years they are turning away from the House. They are turning away from parliamentarians. They are turning away from the democratic institutions people fought two world wars to maintain.

• (1520)

That has profound implications not only for the House but also for our nation. If the House cannot be a place where solutions are debated, where we can have dynamic tension between us, where we can have fights over meaningful solutions to problems that affect Canadians, then the House does not deserve to exist.

All members of parliament would agree that the House does not work democratically. If there is one solution the government could do to benefit the people of our country, it would be to democratize the House. It would be to give members of parliament a free vote. It would be to liberalize the committee structure so that committees can analyze government legislation properly, can analyze supply properly and be free to do that. Private members' business should have some meaning. Private members in the House regardless of their political stripe should be able to introduce meaningful solutions to address problems affecting their constituents.

We do not need, as the NDP would want, big government and many rules and regulations. Sweden is an example of where that was applied. Interest rates have skyrocketed. Unemployment rates have skyrocketed. There has been a weakening of Sweden's social programs. High taxes and complex rules and regulations kill jobs and erode the tax base that is needed to pay for health care, education and other social programs.

The perverse logic and the type of socialist policies advocated by the NDP actually hurt the very people the NDP wants to help. Those policies do not help the poor and underprivileged. They erode earning potential. They deprive people of jobs. They erode the social programs that people require.

We would like to describe the so-called right of centre policies that are wanted. Why do we want lower taxes? Why do we want smaller government? Why do we want an elimination of rules and regulations? Why do we want more free trade? Why do we want globalization? Because that is the best way in the world to pursue job creation and a healthy economy. By doing that we have the money and the tax base to support healthy social programs. We have the money to support welfare for those who need it. We have the money to support health care. We have the money to support education. High taxes and complex rules and regulations do the exact opposite.

An hon. member: High debt.

Mr. Keith Martin: And high debt, as my colleague mentioned.

I challenge any member of the House to show me one case in any country in the world where high taxes, complex rules and regulations and interventionist government actually have improved employment, strengthened social programs and improved the freedoms of people in that country. There is not a single case in the world.

We have a situation where the interventionist, socialist policies of the NDP, Bob Rae's Ontario and Glen Clark's British Columbia, should be dead. We have struck a knife right through the heart of those policies because they simply do not work. Those policies hurt the very people the NDP professes to help.

The Canadian Alliance has been fighting for smaller government for the Canadian people. We want democracy for the Canadian people. We want lower taxes so we can create jobs. We want a healthy economy so we have the money for health care and education.

We support globalization. Globalization is the only way to have a rules based mechanism for better labour laws, better environmental protection, and to resolve disputes between nations. That is what we are trying to do. We have managed to balance good, strong fiscal policy with good, strong social policy. Those policies will help all Canadians equally.

• (1525)

Mr. Alex Shepherd (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a lot of respect for the member because he is very interested in foreign policy which is not common among his compatriots on the other side.

Part of the motion by the New Democratic Party talks about sovereignty. As I listened to many of his party's members intervene in the House, I heard them be concerned that they do not think our foreign policy specifically on Iraq mirrors that of the United States. They have been concerned that our military should be more harmonious and work more closely with the United States. Just today we talked about the airport tax. They questioned why it could not be just like in the United States. They have been very vocal on the whole issue of a continental energy policy, that somehow we

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ought to integrate the energy policy of North America, that Canada's energy policy should be dovetailed with that of the United States.

I find it miraculous that the member can say that Canada needs saving. It seems to me that we need saving from the kind of thoughts his party is putting forward, that if we want to have an independent foreign policy, we have to walk the talk and have an independent foreign policy.

Every time members of his party stand, I hear them ask why we cannot be ready, aye ready with the Americans. Could the member address that issue?

Mr. Keith Martin: Mr. Speaker, the issue is not one of harmonization but one of efficiency. We cannot deny that the United States is our closest partner whether it is trade or security. The bilateral security relationship we have with the United States enables us as a country to receive benefits far beyond those we could possibly engage in ourselves. This does not preclude having an independent foreign policy nor an independent monetary and fiscal policy. That is why this party has not pursued dollarization.

The hon. member should read the very eloquent solutions that have come from my colleagues on how we can strengthen our economy through a good strong monetary and fiscal policy and indeed on our foreign policy where we perceive harmonization as being for the benefit of the Canadian public.

We want harmonization on security so that we are within a North American envelope. That will ensure Canadians greater protection and will protect our north-south trade while ensuring that we have a steel fence enabling us to pick up terrorists and other unwanted individuals.

The Canadian Alliance foreign policy is a balanced one. It reflects the realities of the world today and enables us to make our own independent decisions on foreign policy.

Mr. Andy Burton (Skeena, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the NDP supply day motion reads:

That, in response to Canadians' desire to save Canada as a sovereign nation and strengthen our distinctive contribution in the world, this House calls upon the government to reflect in its budgetary policy the New Democratic Party 12-Point Plan to Save Canada.

The first of those illustrious 12 points is on the Kyoto protocol. Specifically it states:

Enhance Canada's environment, including a national implementation plan for reducing greenhouse gases and ratification of the Kyoto protocol in 2002.

Although the goal of protecting the environment is one most Canadians, including myself, are certainly very interested in achieving, a few simple questions come to mind.

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First, how can this be achieved in a society so dependent on fossil fuels? Second, how can Canada, and in particular certain provinces with economies largely built on the sale of that fuel to other countries like the U.S., still function successfully without that income generator? Furthermore, if the U.S. does not sign on, it creates even larger problems for Canada.

The simple answer is we need to work toward a balance between the interests of the environment and that of industry and the economy. To consider the merits of one without the other is not only disrespectful to stakeholders, but it is also foolhardy in the long run.

Point number 2 on the list states:

Strengthen the role of aboriginal, Metis and Inuit people in the Canadian family.

This is doublespeak by polished NDP spin doctors. What do they mean by strengthen their role? Their role is the same as the role we expect all Canadians to try their best to play. That is the role of nation builder through earning an income to support the family, by contributing to society, to community involvement and volunteerism and to use their creativity and initiative to make their individual lives better in any way possible in their particular situation. This is what society expects from anyone in Canada.

We all strive to be better people, better citizens and better stewards of our environment. That ethic is present in everyday life in Canada.

What I find frustrating is that this particular point suggests that unless the government and therefore society forcefully and intentionally intervenes on behalf of aboriginal, Metis and Inuit to a larger extent than for everyone else in the country, these groups of Canadians cannot make it on their own merits. This is a premise which I do not believe. They have the ability that we all have. I am quite sure they are capable of implementing it.

Point number 3 states:

Reaffirm Canada's international peacekeeping role and rehabilitate Canada's reputation as respected internationalists.

This is something to which I would give my conditional support. To elaborate further, most Canadians agree that we should continue Canada's international peacekeeping efforts. It has been a proud tradition and strong role we have played for generations. However, the reality today is that our armed forces are so poorly equipped, underpaid, understaffed and overused that we simply cannot keep up our traditional level of assistance around the world.

We have three distinct choices in my view. First, we limit ourselves to the peacekeeping role and reduce our commitments. Our second option could be to focus on becoming a special force military. To do so we would need to reduce, if not eliminate, our current peacekeeping commitments abroad and ensure we are very well equipped to handle the special forces missions we are asked to take part in.

Our third option is one which I believe for a country of our size and stature in the world we should strive to achieve. It would be both options one and two. To do so we need to begin to respect our armed forces by providing them with adequate funding to achieve their goals. We cannot continue to fake support for our military through, quite frankly, such ambiguous statements as the third point by the NDP.

Point number 4 deals with the important topic of health care funding and reads as follows:

Re-establish the federal government as full partner in funding health care and post-secondary education as public, not for profit systems.

This is a frequent topic of heated debate not only in the House but in the media as well as around the dinner tables of many Canadian families. Everyone seems to have their own theory on how to fix the ailing public health care system. It seems the NDP theory is to throw more money at what most people agree is a dysfunctional and unsustainable health care system.

The NDP members are living in the past, what they themselves would likely call the good old days of purely socialized medicare.

● (1530)

However the reality today is that the system is bloated and in desperate need of repair. Our population is aging and the stress we see today on an already overused public system will only increase exponentially as time goes by. Throwing more money at the system is an outdated socialistic view of solving everything, and that, quite frankly, is what is expected from a solution provided by the NDP.

Therefore I would say that the premise outlined in this point of the NDP's 12 point plan to save Canada is false and that although I certainly agree that stable funding for provinces to provide health care is necessary to fix the problem, it is not the only avenue we need to explore. Again, the NDP was never known for thinking outside the box. Although its members have tried to re-brand themselves, their ideas are still the same old tired ideas of the socialist days of the past.

The second part of point number 4 deals with post-secondary education. Of course once again from the NDP's perspective the quick fix is to throw more money at the system. Just the other day CBC talked about how in the next 10 years Canada will face a critical shortage of university professors. This has little or nothing to do with poor funding and everything to do with the realities of an aging population and, quite frankly, poor planning. Many graduates have stated publicly that the tenure system imposed by universities, which protects the jobs of professors, acts as a disincentive to new graduates because of the need to go through several hoops and spend several years waiting for tenure positions to open up to become an accredited professor. Once again, the system needs an overhaul, yet the NDP would prefer to ignore the details of the problem and throw money at it instead.

Point number 5 calls on the government to "implement a comprehensive strategy for the eradication of child poverty". This is something everyone wants to see. While we are at it, why not strive to eliminate world poverty too? These are good goals and all governments around the world should strive toward this ideal state. However, I would like to know how the NDP proposes to eliminate poverty. That is the question. The NDP has a unique opportunity to be all things to all people without ever facing the responsibility of implementing those promises.

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Point number 6 deals with trade agreements and labour standards. The NDP wants to “ensure all trade agreements include adequate protection for labour standards, and for human rights and the environment”. We are living in a global village and trade is a mainstay of our Canadian economy of which a significantly large percentage is with the United States. The Canadian Alliance supports free trade and as such is certainly concerned with the current softwood lumber dispute with our largest trading partner. We also agree that we need to take down interprovincial trade barriers and reduce government red tape.

The proposal from the NDP would ensure more red tape and regulation without regard for their economic impact. Canada already faces a huge regulatory burden, and higher regulatory costs mean a less competitive economy. Since its inception the Canadian Alliance has stood up for Canadian farmers both in the House and around the country. It is a main plank of our principles and an area of the economy we are very concerned about.

Point number 7 of the NDP plan deals with the family farm. Specifically it states that the government should “enable primary producers and Canadian farm families to compete with foreign subsidies, and reject continental energy and water policies that endanger Canadian control over our natural resources”.

First I would like to remind the House that the Canadian Alliance stands firmly behind the Canadian farm family. Farmers need a level playing field. Rather than engaging in an endless subsidy war, the Canadian Alliance would focus on ending foreign subsidies.

I am short on time so I will jump to point number 11 which speaks to the NDP concern that control in the media has become more centralized. Specifically this point calls on the government to “strengthen pluralistic and democratic discourse”. I cannot understand what the NDP is talking about here, but it would seem that the NDP is concerned that the Liberal left leaning print media is not on its side. I would say they are not on our side either but no one sees us wanting to create more government owned propaganda machines. What we need to do is encourage more competition within the media.

I will conclude by saying that the NDP has a luxury that it shares only with the Bloc, that is, it will never form a government and therefore it can promise everyone everything without ever having to implement any of it. A poll recently found that of all professions Canadians least trust politicians, because they believe we make all kinds of promises and never deliver. The NDP perpetuates this concern and this 12 point plan is a prime example of pie in the sky ideas with no real plan for or hope of implementation.

• (1535)

Hon. Lorne Nystrom (Regina—Qu'Appelle, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the hon. member. He of course represents the party that is now fifth in the public opinion polls in terms of public support in the country. In terms of popularity, I wonder why that is happening. It is in fifth place in the polls in this country in terms of popularity, so it must have a program that is not very realistic. Otherwise Canadians would be buying into this.

I want to ask the member about the 12th point in the program, electoral reform, and hear what he thinks about electoral reform and

bringing in a measure of proportional representation and making sure that everyone's vote is equal and no vote is wasted.

Almost every country in the world has some measure of proportional representation. The Americans do not. George W. Bush actually became president even though he had 550,000 fewer votes than Al Gore. Al Gore got more votes and George W. Bush became the president of the United States.

I would like to ask him what he thinks about the idea of serious electoral reform so that we would have a parliament that reflects how people vote. Look at parliament today. There is a majority government with 40% of the votes and there was a turnout of 60% in the last campaign. About a quarter of the Canadian people supported the Liberal government across the way and it has a mandate for five years. Even my friend from the Toronto area is pretty embarrassed by those kinds of results.

I wonder if my friend in the Alliance Party is in agreement with our position that we should have serious electoral reform so that a vote is a vote is a vote, so that no vote is wasted and every vote counts. A person could actually vote NDP in rural Alberta and it would count and a person could vote for the Alliance in Newfoundland and it would count. Everybody in the country should be equal in terms of voting power.

• (1540)

Mr. Andy Burton: Mr. Speaker, that is a large number of questions. On the issue of polling, it is very clear that my party did very well in the last election. We certainly have a lot more seats in the House than the party down at the other end of the House. We strived very hard for reform in the House, for giving a stronger voice to the members in the House, which I think is the way to deal with reform and get the voices of Canadians out there. We represent the Canadian people. Reform in the House would go a long way toward creating a much fairer situation in Canada. I think the member very clearly knows that and understands that.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I particularly appreciate the member putting some focus on the issue of child poverty.

As we know, when we talk about child poverty we are talking about family poverty. The member will know well that family breakdown is a significant event in our country. In fact, lone parent families represent about 14% of all families in Canada but account for over 52% of all children living in poverty.

The member did say there is nothing substantive here, but if the member has any suggestions on what element or elements there should be I would be interested in hearing how we can approach this important problem of family poverty.

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Mr. Andy Burton: Mr. Speaker, obviously this issue is of concern to all Canadians and people all around the world. My party, like all other parties, believes in a strong family unit. I think that the best way to build and strengthen that unit and work toward eradicating poverty is to provide an economic base, a tax regime whereby the economy can expand, where jobs are created for people.

We put people to work and one thing leads to another. They have pride in themselves and the family's pride grows. When people are working the tax base is there to provide a good, strong educational system. It costs money to do this. The way we do it is by creating employment and a regime that would allow people to work and to keep the dollars they earn, not have them all taxed back. We allow them to put those dollars into the economy, to spend those dollars, and in that way create the tax base required to support our systems of education and health care and to help those who need it.

Hon. John McCallum (Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to a certain extent I would like to congratulate the NDP for their 12 points. I have read them and I think to some extent all of us can subscribe to some of the principles embodied in those 12 points. I am not saying the NDP is perfect. To some extent they are in what might be described as a time warp, following interventionist tax and spend permanent deficit policies that were abandoned years or even decades ago by thinking lefties around the world. Whether we look at Tony Blair in the U.K. or at Scandinavia or at the social democrats in Europe or Australia, all of them have abandoned the kinds of policies the NDP is proposing today.

Nevertheless, there are some positive elements in their 12 points. Indeed, when I think about what the government has accomplished, not just in the last budget but since being elected in 1993, many of those points that the NDP has mentioned resonate with me as things that our government has achieved.

By the way, Mr. Speaker, I would like to share my time with the hon. member for Mississauga South. I neglected to mention that.

I ask members to take themselves back to 1993 and ask themselves what the state of the Canadian economy was then. In a word, I think one could say it was bad, because we had unemployment rates and interest rates at or near double digits and we had a deficit of \$43 billion. In late 1994 we had the Mexico crisis and people in Canada and the U.S. were saying Canada would be the next Mexico and the IMF would be coming in. Members may recall that the *Wall Street Journal* was saying we were going to be a third world country.

Then the government took strong action against the \$43 billion deficit. As a consequence, since that time the \$43 billion deficit has become a \$17 billion surplus, as of last year. We have reduced the government debt ratio substantially. We have reduced the external debt ratio by 20 percentage points over the last few years. We have restored sanity, health and dynamism to the Canadian economy.

I will just mention in passing that a few months ago in the House the leader of the fifth party actually boasted that he and the Tories inherited a \$38 billion deficit from the Liberals in 1984 and left us later, in 1993, with a deficit of \$43 billion. He was boasting of the \$5 billion increase in the deficit. I guess the reason for his boast was that the deficit he left us was a little smaller as a per cent of GDP than the

deficit that he inherited. However, it shows the absence of strong objectives by the Tories that they could boast they left us with a bigger deficit when we in fact not only wiped out their huge deficit but turned it into a \$17 billion surplus.

Another issue that the Liberal government has addressed effectively is the productivity issue. It is true that there has been, over the last decades, slower productivity growth in Canada than in the United States, but the productivity issue is a new economy issue because Canada's productivity growth in old economy industries has been if anything a little higher than that of the U.S., whereas the U.S. has done better than we have and indeed better than every other country in the new economy industries in terms of productivity growth.

What has the government done to address the new economy and productivity issue? We have done a lot. Not only have we reduced the corporate tax rate to the point where in a couple of years it will be five points lower than that of the U.S., we have also eliminated the income tax surtax, we have slashed the rate of tax on capital gains, we have provided billions of additional dollars for support in research and we have not finished yet because we also have the innovation plan announced recently by the Minister of Industry.

The government's tax reduction package is also helping individual Canadians, particularly the middle class. A Canadian family of four with a combined income of \$60,000 will see a decline of about \$1,200 in federal taxes this year.

[*Translation*]

● (1545)

All in all, this program of tax cuts is the most ambitious in our entire history. In terms of dollars per capita, it is much more generous than the cuts proposed by President Bush last year.

Clearly we have made enormous progress in very little time. In less than a decade, Canada's economy, which was one of the weakest among industrialized countries, has become one of the most vigorous.

[*English*]

Earlier today we had news which gives further evidence that we have no technical recession and that indeed we hope that a recovery is underway. Canada's gross domestic product grew by 2% in a quarter, far exceeding analysts' expectations. If we leave out inventory GDP grew by 6% in a quarter. Real take home pay is up by 5.7% largely because of a 7.5% tax cut.

I am not being over confident about the future. There are still weaknesses in terms of profits and investment. The consumer and housing industry are strong reflecting the influence of lower interest rates from substantial tax cuts last year but also additional tax cuts this year.

People in New York and London agree with our story. They agree that we have indeed made enormous progress since 1993 in terms of taxes, productivity, employment, just about anything we care to think of. The foreigners agree with us and we agree about this progress.

It is only across the aisle, particularly Canadian Alliance members who keep giving us their totally distorted statistics and negative attitude on every issue. It is those members who are conveying the wrong impression and as I said earlier they are essentially a part of the problem and not a part of the solution.

I say without any hesitation, for the reasons that I have outlined, that the government has already demonstrated its commitment to fair tax and sound monetary policy as advocated by NDP members. Through the actions that I described it is clear that we have followed their advice.

• (1550)

[Translation]

Let us look at some of the elements in the NDP plan. It calls on the federal government to restore its full participation in health care and education funding. Here again, this government's constructive measures leave little doubt as to its position on this issue.

In health care services, last year's budget reiterated that the \$23.4 billion set aside for the health care agreements and early childhood development, concluded by the first ministers in September 2000, were fully protected despite the impact of the most recent economic downturn.

[English]

I might say that there is a whole lot of confusion. If we listen to the provincial premiers we might think that the federal government pays for only about 15% of health care. That is because they ignore the tax point element of our contribution which makes the total contribution very much higher.

[Translation]

The worst, when it comes to this, is the Bloc Quebecois. The Bloc Quebecois' position is completely contradictory. On the one hand, it does not count the federal government's contribution in terms of tax points. It does not recognize at all the role of the tax points that have already been transferred. Yet, on the other hand, it wants more. It wants more tax points. Perhaps from the perspective of the Bloc Quebecois or the Parti Quebecois this makes some kind of sense, but for us, it is a completely contradictory position.

[English]

Let me say in response to the NDP that we have taken substantial actions as well in the areas of infrastructure programs which it wants us to do. We added another \$2 billion program.

We have taken strong actions in terms of the aboriginal population including \$185 million in support of the development and well-being of aboriginal children. The Prime Minister has signalled his personal commitment for improvements in this area.

We have taken strong actions in the area of agriculture and have committed ourselves to more.

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Canada's economy is once again on the move. Our industrial base is being transformed and revitalized. Just as our athletes demonstrated at the recent winter Olympics Canada is ready to take on the world and win. Therefore, I will be voting against the motion.

Mrs. Bev Desjarlais (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I cannot help but ask my hon. colleague about the fairness in the tax system that his government is dealing with. He commented on the Liberals slashing the income tax on capital gains. I wonder how that compares to the finance minister taking back GST rebates from school boards on school busing services. That is one heck of a fair tax system. Seventy million dollars will come out of school board budgets because the finance minister is retroactively changing GST legislation to get it. Is that fair taxation?

• (1555)

Hon. John McCallum: With all due respect, Mr. Speaker, I do not think the hon. member understands the situation. The government is not taking one additional penny from school boards.

It is simply not allowing them to claim a 100% tax reduction. It was always the system of 66% or whatever percentage it was. It was always the intent and the rule. We must protect the tax base from erosion and we are enforcing the tax system as it was originally developed and put into law.

Hon. Lorne Nystrom (Regina—Qu'Appelle, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a question along the same vein about a strong economy in terms of sovereignty and independence of our country.

Drawing on his background as a chief economist for a major Canadian bank I want to ask the minister about statements he made right after his appointment. He talked about high credit card interest rates. What will he do about that?

He has increased the expectations of ordinary people that the government would be doing something about it because he took a very progressive stand when he was sworn in. In the meantime, has he been slapped on the wrist? Is that why he has been silent or should we expect something in terms of an announcement that will be very progressive in the next few days?

Hon. John McCallum: Mr. Speaker, I have noticed modest reductions in credit card interest rates. There was a new credit card introduced by one of the banks in the last few weeks which had an interest rate of prime plus two. There has been a modest amount of progress but this is not to deny that most credit card interest rates remain very high. We encourage individuals to search for the card that suits them best. We have our own Industry Canada website which makes comparisons.

The other thing we are trying to do is enhance competition in financial services. One of the major thrusts is to increase competition by making it easier for credit unions and insurance companies to compete with banks, to allow foreign banks to come in, and for new banks to start up, et cetera.

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I would like to see lower credit card interest rates but our primary thrust is to provide better information so that consumers are better able to shop around and to increase the degree of competition in financial services in Canada.

Hon. Lorne Nystrom: Mr. Speaker, my good friend is sounding more and more like the former deputy prime minister, the member for Windsor West, and he has only been a cabinet minister for five weeks.

Could he go back and reread the comments about credit card interest rates he made after he was appointed and what he would do about them? Will he make that undertaking to the House and then come back to answer the question later on?

It sounds as though he has already been in cabinet too long with all his talk similar to what the member for Windsor West used to give us, the great gray fog in those days. However he did make some commitments that he would be doing something about it in a very specific way. We are not talking about websites or shopping around or one bank putting out a new credit card with a prime plus two interest rate. Even Liberal members are smiling at that answer.

Surely to goodness the minister deserves one more chance to put on the record what he will do specifically to make sure we get a better break in terms of interest rates and credits cards. I want to give him that opportunity. He is a good friend of mine and I want to make sure he has the opportunity to show that he is a man of his word. I do not want to see him embarrassed so I am offering him a second opportunity.

Hon. John McCallum: Mr. Speaker, I am most grateful to my hon. colleague for giving me this opportunity and additional air time. In fact I had been on the job less than 24 hours when I made those comments. If we refer to press articles and so on we will see I made no commitment to do anything specific. I said I would look into it.

• (1600)

Mr. Paul Szabo (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are debating a motion today on how to strengthen Canada. There is a 12 point plan.

In contemplating strengthening and saving Canada we must understand what would be indicative of that. Strengthening Canada and measuring the strength and security of Canada is really a measure of the health and well-being of its people. That is really what it comes down to.

One of the 12 points in the motion is to implement a comprehensive strategy to eliminate child poverty. It is extremely important that the issue be understood in a broader context than simply in an economic context. There has been too much said about the money one should spend to eliminate it. It is not that simple.

Poverty is one of the least understood issues in Canada. Advocacy groups call it child poverty. It tugs at the heartstrings of every Canadian. They have invoked images of children starving on the streets and report that the problem has increased by 50% over the last decade. Who could possibly be against eliminating child poverty? The bold reality is that poverty in Canada is more a matter of social poverty than it is of economic power.

There is a debate going on about how we should define poverty. The positions range from food, clothing and shelter deprivation to the other side of something about not being able to fully integrate into a community so that one would not be noticed. It is basically a question of being able to live in a community without being noticed.

Defining poverty first would be an important starting point. Consequently if we had a definition we would then have a foundation for social welfare in Canada. Defining a poverty level would identify the level of poverty that we are prepared to tolerate. There will always be the poorest in the land regardless of how everyone improves. There will always be a fourth quartile.

The absence of an official poverty line means that we must rely on other measures. Statistics Canada has a low income cutoff which suggests that some 17% of Canadians are significantly below the income of the average Canadian family. This is a relative measure of basically who is at the bottom.

Anti-poverty groups use this measure for who is poor, however, the measure does have a number of flaws. For example, 40% of the families who are so-called poor under that measurement own their own homes and 50% of those people who own their own homes do not even have a mortgage. Are people who own their own home outright really poor? There are assets. The measurements we use now really do not take into account the fact that there are underpinning assets.

Anti-poverty groups are growing in size and influence and they report annually on the growing level of poverty in Canada. They fiercely lobby governments to act and it is an important activity but the principles under which they lobby have to be broadened to take into account that there are real social underpinnings.

They have suggested solutions to the House, and to parliamentarians and governments, that include the need for more jobs, social assistance, social housing, tax benefits for families with children, money for health and early childhood development programs, employment insurance benefits and subsidized day care. These are just a few of the demands by the advocates for eliminating poverty in Canada.

LICO is accepted by these groups as the measure of poverty and it is accepted for one simple reason. It is an economic measure that demands or calls for economic solutions. If it had to address the root causes of poverty I believe it would open up a Pandora's box that few would be prepared to face.

Homelessness in Canada has become one of the target areas of discussing poverty in Canada. In January 1999 the federal government provided resource funding for a study on homelessness in the city of Toronto, our largest city that has a very large homelessness problem. The task force chaired by Anne Golden issued a report.

• (1605)

It declared it had workable solutions. It engaged all levels of government, all interest groups to have that input.

If we look very closely at the report, we would find that it paints a much different picture of poverty than simply economic poverty that many seem to talk about. The report identified that of the homeless in Toronto, 35% suffered from mental illness and 15% were aboriginals off reserve.

We all know of the serious problems that occur within the aboriginal communities in Canada. Probably 70% of aboriginals live off reserve. In fact, in Toronto of all its homeless, 15% were aboriginals who were living off reserve and 10% cent were abused women. We know that domestic violence is a serious problem in our society. These homeless people are the poor.

The one that tugs at my heart strings more than any of the others really is that 28% of the homeless in Toronto are youth who have been alienated from their families. Of that 28% of youth who are homeless, 70% have experienced physical or sexual abuse. What an indictment of our society.

Then we could look at the fact that the majority of the homeless across all those groups are also abusers of drugs and alcohol; another social problem within our society that we have to tackle.

Finally, 47% of the homeless in Toronto do not come from Toronto. They migrate to this large urban centre from Mississauga, a next door neighbour. We have nominal homeless situations in Mississauga and yet 15 minutes away in the city of Toronto there are thousands of homeless people on the streets. Why is that? It is because cities like Toronto build facilities, build shelters and provide services. It will give them the food, booze, smokes, anything that they want. It is called the urban magnet. We see the same thing in Vancouver, Montreal and Calgary. It is an urban magnet.

Part of the problem is that communities across our country have to invest in their residences as well rather than have no programs or support for people who have difficulties so that they do not have to migrate to these large urban centres. Large urban centres are not the place where our kids should be roaming around the streets. We have a social problem in Canada.

On the issue of children living in poverty, which is family poverty, lone parent families account for about 14% of all families in Canada. They also account for about 52% of all families living in poverty. Our rate of family breakdown in Canada is just under 50%. The incidence of domestic violence continues. Alcohol and drug abuse in our schools and in our communities has escalated with tragic consequences that we see time and time again. Unwanted teen pregnancies still remain at high levels. Over 20% of students in our high schools drop out and do not complete their high school education. Surely these are Canada's poor in waiting. Nearly 25% of all children enter adult life with significant mental, social or behavioural problems. These represent the social poverty in our society and they are the root causes of the vast majority of economic poverty in Canada.

If poverty in Canada is a horror and a national disgrace, then the breakdown of the Canadian family is the principal cause of that disgrace. Those who express outrage at poverty but who do not express the same outrage at the breakdown of the family are truly in denial.

Supply

However these days of political correctness, the family structure and the condition represent a minefield through which few are prepared to tread. Anti-poverty groups have meekly sidestepped the social poverty dimension. However, if we are not prepared to address social poverty in Canada, then we effectively choose to tolerate the very poverty that we so nobly seek to eliminate.

If we could raise one well-adjusted generation of Canadians, poverty as we know it would be a condition of the past. In that context, I mean the physical, mental and social health. It also contemplates that our social, moral and family values are sound and that our families, educators and legislators promote and protect those values. Our children are a function of the society in which they live. Those who become our future poor do so because we fail to put their interests ahead of our own.

● (1610)

Collectively, we are responsible for the poverty that exists in Canada today. Therefore, it is our collective responsibility to resolve both its social and its economic causes.

Mrs. Bev Desjarlais (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the area I want to touch on the most, which my colleague from Mississauga mentioned, is the insinuation that the reason big cities like Toronto and Vancouver have so many homeless, and included in that homeless are 35% with mental illness, 15% aboriginals, 10% abused women, 28% youth of which 70% are physically or sexually abused, is that there are shelters and places to look after them.

I would suggest that we are really putting that in the wrong context. The bottom line is any person I knew who ended up in such a situation where they had no home or place to go or shelter to rely on, did so because they usually were leaving someplace that was a hell of a lot worse. They were looking for something better, which was not there. However they were stuck there because they did not have a penny in their pocket to perhaps get back.

To suggest that people with mental will head to that magnet of Toronto, what about looking at the real issue. Our health care system has failed and we no longer have supports in place in a lot of those communities because we do not have the dollars going into the health care system. We have prioritized wrong. As a government, the priorities have been wrong. When dollars should have gone to support those small communities so they could keep people in their communities, they were not there. When dollars should have gone into aboriginal communities and education should have been in aboriginal communities, they were not there. They are looking for something better.

On behalf of every aboriginal from my riding who has left a horrible situation on a reserve to look for something better, I take exception to someone suggesting they went there for a free place at a homeless shelter.

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, I suggest that the member would want to look at the Anne Golden report to see the details. These are facts in reporting on the situation in Toronto. It does not paint the situation for every community.

Supply

However, 70% of aboriginals do live off reserve and, unfortunately, within the homeless of Toronto, about 15% of the demographics of the homeless represent aboriginals off reserve. The single largest service provider for aboriginals in Toronto who are homeless is called Anishnawbe. It specifically knows where its clients are and provides them daily with their food, their clothing and all the things that they need, including cigarettes and alcohol. That is part of the reason why 70% of aboriginals are off reserve. It is not because they are poor. Many are just out integrating into other parts of Canadian life, and that is part of it.

The urban magnet as a concept is well established. In my community of Mississauga, which is a 15 minute drive from downtown Toronto, a survey was done to find out how many people were living on the streets. Five were found. However, 10,000 people were living on the streets in the greater Toronto area. They were not in Mississauga because it did not have shelters, or community supports or services. It said that Toronto had it all. If communities abandon their responsibility to provide supports and services, then naturally people will migrate.

The member is quite right when she says that 35% of the homeless in Toronto suffer from mental illness. Part of the reason is that Ontario closed down 10 of its mental health institutions. We cannot compress these services. People who suffer from various mental illnesses need medication. They probably are unable to care for themselves. By and large, most of them come out of a mental health institution, are given a bus ticket and told to go to a shelter.

That is not the way we should treat people who suffer from mental illness. I agree with that. We have to embrace the fact that we have people in our society who suffer from illnesses or other social conditions and require our attention, our compassion and our love. I believe that the homeless in Toronto, in fact the homeless all across this great land, represent people who no one love.

• (1615)

Mr. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, like my colleague from Mississauga, I just want to express my views on this subject. I had the opportunity not too long ago to go on a street patrol at night to deliver food and medicine, as well as cigarettes, to people who were homeless. However we talk about poverty in Canada, it is not until we travel to other parts of the world that we realize what poverty is.

Less than 48 hours ago I came back from the border of Afghanistan at the Khyber Pass. This is what real poverty is all about. This global village that we know, this Earth of ours, is certainly failing. Only 25 trucks daily go through the Khyber Pass to deliver humanitarian aid to the people of Afghanistan in the southeast corner.

Poverty in Canada is indeed something that we should have in mind, but we should also look at where we, the humanitarians of this world, are failing our brethren in other parts of the world. I brought this to the attention of the ministers for CIDA and external affairs, and I hope that we will start eradicating poverty in Toronto in the immediate future and hopefully in other parts of the world.

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, I welcome the comments and input from the hon. member. He is quite right. Back in 1989, when the House first seriously dealt with the issue of child poverty in a

resolution to seek to achieve the elimination of poverty, I read the speeches. They talked about food, clothing and shelter. The context of the debate was that we should not have food, clothing and shelter deprivation for our kids.

Now it is different. Campaign 2000 today has put out a brochure which says that a child lives in poverty if he or she cannot afford a birthday gift equivalent to those of the other kids who go to the party. Poverty does have to be defined.

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: The hon. member for Yorkton—Melville, Firearms Registry.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today on this 12 point resolution presented by the New Democratic Party. I will point out immediately that we in the Bloc Quebec are not here to save Canada or to have anything to do with Canadian nation building. I think that our purpose here has always been clear.

It would seem that on the other side of the House, and among the NDP as well, it has not yet been grasped that the Bloc Quebecois is here for one and only one purpose, which is of course to defend the interests of Quebec until Quebec attains its sovereign state status.

We have never deviated from that path. We are highly enthusiastic about building a country, Quebec. I can understand the enthusiasm of the Canadian nationalists such as my NDP colleagues to build a better country.

I will, if I may, address one by one the points submitted by the NDP, with a few comments and criticisms as well of the government's actions.

The first point addresses reinforcement of the environmental heritage and signature of the Kyoto protocol. We support this. If Quebec were a sovereign country, we would long ago have ratified the Kyoto agreements. Moreover, the National Assembly has already passed a unanimous motion on this. As well, Quebec has already signed a protocol on stabilizing CO₂ emissions.

We hope Canada will do the same, and that it shares Quebec's desire for a healthier environment and a desire to pass on to our children an environmental heritage that is more respectful of sustainable development.

The second point reads:

Strengthen the role of Aboriginal, Métis and Inuit people in the Canadian family.

Once again, and I do not point this out to be cynical, Quebec, a sovereign state of Quebec—and we did not wait to become that before acting—will reflect modernity and equality in its dealings with the aboriginal nations. I would, moreover, remind my Canadian friends that Quebec, under the Lévesque government, was the first to sign an historical agreement with the James Bay Cree.

Recently, another historic agreement was signed between the Quebec and Cree nations as equals. The following are extracts from this agreement concluded on February 7 between Quebec Premier Bernard Landry and the Grand Chief of the Grand Council of the Crees, Ted Moses, in Waskaganish.

On this occasion, Premier Landry said:

The signing of this agreement between our two peoples paves the way for co-operation based on mutual respect, dialogue and trust. In many respects, our two nations are innovating and leading the way. Other countries are already watching us. This is an unique opportunity to show them our desire and determination to turn this partnership into an outstanding success.

I would also like to quote Grand Chief Ted Moses. At the signing of this historic agreement between the Quebec and Cree nations, he said:

The Cree nation is entering the 21st century with a new spirit and many challenges. The agreement signed today represents the end of the Crees' struggle for the recognition of their rights. Premier Landry and myself have decided to put the weight of history behind us in order to develop a more harmonious relationship.

We must pay tribute to such an historic agreement, which should serve as an example to Canadians on how to build a country.

The third point in the New Democratic Party's plan is, and I quote:

Reaffirm Canada's international peace keeping role and rehabilitate Canada's reputation as respected internationalists.

It is true that this is something Canada needs badly.

● (1620)

One only has to watch the Minister of National Defence act regarding the conflict in Afghanistan, or listen to the Minister of Foreign Affairs contradict himself, to realize that, in the end, they do not control anything. Canada is losing what little credibility it had left since this government was elected, because it did not make international relations a priority.

They are tarnishing the image of Canada and that of Lester Pearson, who helped create the peacekeeping forces through his initiative. It is a shame that Canada has become merely a secondary partner, which blindly complies with the decisions made by the United States, not even knowing what is happening on the international scene regarding a conflict as serious as the one in Afghanistan.

In terms of international aid, this is truly a disgrace. While Pearson himself suggested and supported the objective of allocating 0.7% of the GDP to international aid, we are still contributing only 0.26%. At this rate, Canada will never reach the objective that it claims to want to achieve. That is a disgrace.

Naturally, we hope that Canada will gain back some of its importance on the international scene, but having attended the recent Davos conference in New York City, I can say that the Quebec delegation was right up there with the world's top international delegations, and it made me proud.

Supply

It goes without saying that we can only endorse point No. 4, which reads as follows:

Re-establish the federal government as full partner in funding health care and post-secondary education as public, not-for-profit systems.

In the current context, I think that the New Democrats have a lot of work to do to achieve the fourth objective in their plan. I also deplore their attitude about this issue.

Of course, in recent years the government made savage cuts to transfers for health and education. However, I can only deplore the fact that the New Democrats are again asking the government to tie Canada-wide national standards to the federal contribution, while refusing any discussion on decentralization and on the transfer of tax points, which would allow the provinces, and the Quebec government, to fully control their provincial jurisdictions.

● (1625)

I can only regret the government's attitude in slashing transfer payments for health, post-secondary education and income support. I also regret its closed mindedness about any proposal that would make it possible for the government of Quebec and the provinces to have more funding for these essential public services, in keeping with their constitutional responsibility.

I also regret the fact that we are in a situation where the federal government is even being encouraged to use a big stick. Even if it contributes a mere 14 cents of every dollar invested in health, and 8 cents for every dollar invested in education, the NDP continues to be in favour of centralization, of a strong central government wielding a big stick over the provinces.

As for trade agreements, we support the principle of ensuring they "include adequate protection for labour standards, and for human rights and the environment."

The question needs to be raised. I was very proud of the fact that Quebec was the only province present at the parallel summit in Pôrto Alegre. It was there precisely in order to create a free trade area of the Americas that would fully respect environmental and labour standards and the various human rights and freedoms.

But where were the other provinces? Where were the Canadian representatives, where were the New Democrats with their concern for these principles? Some of my colleagues paid out of their pockets to go to Pôrto Alegre to make their concerns known about a better world and the creation of a zone encompassing the three Americas, a free trade area that would respect the human aspect. Where was the NDP, where were the Liberals, where were the members of the other parties that sit in this House?

We in the Bloc Quebecois were there along with the representatives of the government of Quebec. These, moreover, were the only representatives of a government that is still taking action within Canada.

As far as the point about agricultural producers goes, we are in agreement. In Canada, as in Quebec, agricultural producers are the victims of international subsidies, particularly those provided by the United States and by Europe. There is a price and subsidy war going on. This war had abated somewhat in recent years, but it has returned with a vengeance.

Supply

The government has been more Catholic than the Pope, as the expression goes, and forced farmers to accept drastic cuts in their subsidies, only to find themselves in a tough spot compared to American and European farmers who continue to be heavily subsidized.

In a sovereign Quebec, we will support, as we do today, this kind of principle of international equity with respect to agricultural support.

Since my time is up, I am prepared to respond to questions and comments from my colleagues.

[*English*]

Mr. Dick Proctor (Palliser, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to elaborate on a couple of points.

As recently as this afternoon in question period our House leader spoke out on the fact that this federal-provincial taxation matter affects the province of Quebec as well as the province of Manitoba and others. He also pointed to the need for the federal government to correct that. This matter of decentralization needs to be placed in some context.

I think the member is factually wrong. My colleague from Burnaby—Douglas was indeed in Porto Alegre earlier this month at the people's summit. I do not know if any representatives from the government party were there.

Given my colleague's knowledge on the subject, I was surprised that he did not deal with the item about fair taxes and sound monetary policy and in particular the matter of U.S. dollarization. I wonder if we could hear the wisdom of his comments on those points.

• (1630)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvan Loubier: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague wholeheartedly for allowing me to address these issues; I did not have enough time to deal with these fundamental issues.

With respect to tax policy, tax justice—and incidentally, this is a concept for which we have advocated since we arrived here in 1993—the Bloc Québécois has always advocated for fairness when it comes to taxation. We were the only ones, the only party in the House of Commons—a sovereignist party—the only sovereignist party to propose any tax reforms, while waiting for Quebec to become independent. It is important to remember that one quarter of all income taxes that make their way here come from Quebec.

We are the only ones to have tabled two reports: one report proposing ways to reform the personal income tax system and another proposing ways to make corporate taxes fairer and more efficient. This has always been one of our major concerns. Incidentally, we led the fight against the transfer of two family trust funds to the United States, funds worth \$2 billion that were exempted from taxes. This means that more than \$400 million in taxes were lost due to this government's inaction. We were the only ones that stepped up to the bat to fight against this.

We were also the only ones to step up to the bat and denounce the Minister of Finance, who has companies in countries that are considered tax havens, including Barbados, which was singled out

by the OECD as a country where tax evasion is promoted and where it is easy to launder money. We asked that the tax treaties signed between Barbados and the Government of Canada be denounced; the Minister of Finance always refused. I understand; when you are judge and jury, why get rid of something that is working for you and that serves your interests?

On this, it is hard to find fault with us, and we support you, particularly when you talk about greater tax justice.

Finally, the issue of dollarization. We support a single currency for the three Americas. I will tell you why quickly.

First, it is impossible to continue the trend that began some 30 years ago. Structurally speaking, the value of the Canadian dollar is constantly diminishing. There is a downward trend. It is a matter of competitiveness for businesses. The value of the Canadian dollar is going down to adjust our relative competitiveness with American companies, so as to promote our exports in a natural way.

Businesses are somewhat cramped by this. They rely on a lower value of the Canadian dollar to maintain their competitiveness. However, this cannot go on forever. This can no longer work with a dollar that is worth 62 cents. How low will we let it go? Down to 35 cents, 30 cents, 25 cents? Will we find ourselves with funny money before the other side wakes up? This is totally ridiculous.

Second, let us not forget that two and a half years ago, we were the only ones talking about the instability of the Canadian dollar. I tell nationalist Canadians to stop considering the Canadian dollar as a strong symbol of Canadian nationalism. This does not make sense. It is a matter of economic survival. The Canadian dollar is a secondary currency on the monetary market and it is the victim of speculators.

Two and a half years ago, its value dropped by 20% at once. There was a 20% drop over a four day period. It went back up a bit, but imagine those who work in businesses, those who must plan their investments based on the prospect of making profits, without knowing what the Canadian dollar will be worth in two months? This does not make any sense.

This is why we must do some thinking and get ready for a single currency. We should stop burying our heads in the sand in the name of a bogus nationalism that is artificially maintained by symbols that do not make sense.

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonnette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to split my time with the member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot.

When I read the motion put forward by the NDP, I said to myself that it contained many good intentions and certainly a number of principles that we share. However, constitutionally, it is flawed.

I would respectfully submit that the difference between the Bloc Québécois and the NDP, if one must be found, is that although we are both motivated by generosity in the way we want the government to intervene in people's lives and in the way we want wealth to be redistributed, my party believes that the right governments must be made accountable. I believe that this is a fundamental difference. It is not enough in politics to want something to happen and just assume that it is not a concern for those who must implement it.

Supply

In January or February, I myself attended the NDP convention, having many friends in that party. As you know, Mr. Speaker, I have friends everywhere, and I am very proud to count you among. When I attended the NDP convention, I followed the proceedings and I was very surprised to see just how centralizing their thinking was.

I respect this in a democratic framework but, God knows, it is not something the Bloc Québécois would go for. Delegates passed a resolution calling for the creation of a department of urban affairs that would deal directly with municipalities. This is obviously a notion which appears in one of the 12 points before us, in connection with infrastructure.

Delegates also passed a resolution calling for a national early childhood policy. Clearly, interference can go pretty far. Ultimately, the various provincial governments—we use the term “national” in speaking about the government of Quebec—could be reduced to nothing more than gigantic municipalities. We do not think that this would be in Quebec's best interests.

Once again, this is not to deny the generosity of the principles put forward in a motion such as the NDP's, but we must think about who is going to have to implement them. I think that this is a very important part of the Bloc Québécois's position.

I will start with the issue that concerns me the most, and probably the one with which I am most familiar, namely health.

This morning, I had the opportunity to speak with Roy Romanow, the former premier of Saskatchewan, who was also justice minister and deputy premier of his province and, most importantly, intergovernmental affairs minister at the time of the patriation of the constitution. In fact, I told him jokingly “Today, you are concerned with surgical knives, but there was a time when you were more concerned with long knives”.

I do not know if he appreciated my sense of humour, but I was obviously referring to his involvement in that issue. Quebecers remember him. I saw him on television. It was in 1981, and I was 19 years old at the time. He had close ties with the government of the present Prime Minister, and it is well known that he worked very overtly, but also very covertly, to negotiate a constitutional system that was rejected by the National Assembly and by all parties represented in the National Assembly.

This morning, I met Mr. Romanow in parliamentary committee. We know how the government shamelessly set up a royal commission headed by a commissioner. The mandate of this royal commission is to review Canada's health care system.

I asked him “Do you not feel a certain lack of legitimacy, from a constitutional standpoint, to find yourself in a position where the government would give you such a mandate?”

In 1957, when hospital insurance was first introduced—members will recall that it was first introduced in western Canada—the federal government had made the commitment to finance the various hospital insurance plans on a 50-50 basis. It started in western Canada and spread to the other provinces, including Quebec. However, Quebec later withdrew and set up its own hospital insurance plan.

● (1635)

Moreover, it is not without significance that the father of hospital insurance in Quebec, Mr. Castonguay, who was a Liberal minister during the Quiet Revolution, wrote in *La Presse* the other day that the government was responsible for the problems being experienced by the provinces, because his estimation of the value of the federal government's withdrawal was nearly \$30 billion.

In the health field alone, our estimate is \$14 billion, yet the father of Quebec hospital insurance, who cannot be accused of being sovereignist, has delivered a verdict with a lucidity that should win over the Liberals.

I told Mr. Romanow “You would have had far more legitimacy if you had been put in charge of a commission of inquiry, and if the federal government had always respected its historical commitments”. The hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot has rightly reminded us that, for every dollar spent on health by the provinces, the federal government provides 14 cents, whereas historically that amount ought to be 50 cents.

Hon. members will recall that, in 2000, all provincial first ministers, regardless of political persuasion, called upon the federal government to restore transfer payments to at least their 1993-94 level, which would be 18 cents on the dollar. This would have made the figure for 2005 not \$21 billion but \$28.9 billion. This is a battle which the Bloc Québécois of course supports most enthusiastically in the House.

We have always pointed out that we do not need the federal government telling us how to reorganize the health system. Moreover, in committee this morning, I made a deposition which I would be happy to repeat here for those who are interested. I said that seven out of ten provinces had already had task forces to analyze the major changes. They do not say that the status quo is acceptable, they do not say that there will be no changes in the way the delivery of health services will be organized, but they do say that this debate is not up to the federal government.

The federal government is responsible for transfer payments and sharing resources. It has a fiduciary responsibility to First Nations. It is responsible for defence. It is responsible for epidemics and quarantines as well as approving drugs. However, it does not have any direct responsibility, except for this clientele, for service delivery.

How legitimate can the Romanow commission be when Quebec already has the Clair report and that the provinces as a whole have already done their work in the matter?

It just happens that my gently Bolshevik NDP friends are proposing more national standards and that the federal government be even more centralizing than in the past. Unfortunately, such a position cannot be supported by the Bloc Québécois.

Supply

I take the opportunity of the distinguished presence of the member for Jonquière to talk about regional development. She will correct me if my figures are wrong, but during the last election campaign the Liberals, under the direction of the Prime Minister and also the current justice minister and immigration minister, made promises to the tune of \$3.5 billion. This is not peanuts.

This is Duplessis style politics, a kind of benign patronage that has been the norm on the government side. It made commitments to the tune of \$3.5 billion and, in its most recent budget, it offered a \$108 million strategic infrastructure program to build roads.

It earmarked 4% for roads, when it promised \$3.5 billion. I believe the time when it could shamelessly think it would not have to be accountable and that the people in Quebec could be tricked by all kinds of election promises is gone. Do you know why it is gone? Because the Bloc Québécois is here to stand up for Quebec, to look after its interests.

I sat to the government that together with the member for Jonquière and all the other Bloc Québécois members, we will not accept that it does not keep its election promises and does not follow through on them.

• (1640)

[English]

Mr. Dick Proctor (Palliser, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to allow the member an opportunity to elaborate on his point on health care regarding decentralization. I will not argue about Quebec's position on this. I put it to him that we are a large diverse country where there are some very poor provinces, relatively speaking, compared with others that are economically better off, more self-sufficient and more resourceful.

The point I am making is, by taking his approach about greater decentralization, how can we ever avoid becoming a checkerboard nation where we have a hodgepodge of arrangements in terms of our health care system? Our health care system is something that Canadians believe in overwhelmingly and want to see continue to the best of our abilities. How can we do that if everybody is allowed to do their own thing, as it were, in terms of administering the health care system if there is not sufficient resources and if there is not somebody with a stick? We can debate about how heavy that piece of lumber should be. How do we do it and still maintain something that we can call universal, equal and egalitarian and not really a two tier or perhaps a ten tier system of health care?

• (1645)

[Translation]

Mr. Réal Ménard: Mr. Speaker, first, let us not forget that, historically, in 1984—the act was passed in 1985 but was introduced in 1984—the Canada Health Act was declared valid. It was declared constitutional not so much because of its five principles, but because of the spending power issue. It is because the federal government has such spending power that the Canada Health Act exists.

If there were no spending power, constitutionally, one cannot be sure that the Canada Health Act, with the five principles that we know, would have withstood a court challenge.

I want to tell my colleague that if the provinces have different health care systems, it will be the provincial governments that will be

accountable to the voters. If voters in Nova Scotia feel that the health care system in place in their province does not meet their expectations, they can choose a government that will do a better job in that regard. I do not think that it is constitutionally and politically desirable that this be a federal responsibility.

Is my colleague not concerned? Over the last few years, what role has the federal government played with regard to health, apart from anything that has to do with the military, the approval of drugs and quarantine? It has destabilized the provinces.

On page 28, the Romanow report recognizes that this situation is not desirable. We must move toward a situation where the Government of Canada honours its constitutional obligation, which is the allocation of financial resources.

Regarding health plans, regarding the delivery of health care and the role of regional boards, I am sorry but this is not the federal government's responsibility. It is a fact that has to be accepted.

Does it mean that we cannot be sorry that Newfoundland and Quebec do not have exactly the same health care system? Perhaps we should be sorry, but not to the point of wishing for the federal government to interfere in areas that, once again, are outside its jurisdiction.

[English]

Mr. Mark Assad (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, after listening to the 12 point plan to save Canada by the member for Halifax, the leader of the NDP, it brought to mind the 12 point plan to save the countries of the world from future wars brought forward by the then president of the United States, Woodrow Wilson, after the first world war. His 12 point plan would have been very good had his country been implicated in it. A lot of his 12 points were not realistic and some of them were rather self-evident.

However, let us deal with the motion that is before us. Number 9 of the NDP's 12 point plan states:

Celebrate immigration as a cornerstone of Canada, restoring respect for diversity and humanity in our immigration practices.

I have always believed we did that but that is beside the point.

[Translation]

I was a little surprised by the motion introduced by the hon. member. I am sure she has attended an oath-swearing ceremony for new Canadian citizens. She has certainly witnessed the extraordinary ties that develop between Canadians and these new citizens. An extensive network of volunteers is the basis for their integration. We do not need a 12 point plan to tell our fellow Canadians how they should behave. Canadians already know what is appropriate.

We have a long tradition of welcoming newcomers and helping them feel at home in their new country. Indeed, the Canadian way is so effective that a number of other countries are interested in knowing more about it. As concerns immigration, Canadians are an example for all to follow, although improvements are always possible.

The Canadian government celebrates immigration and diversity each time it holds an oath-swearing ceremony welcoming new Canadians into our great family. The hon. member could feel the joy that permeates this kind of ceremony and she could feel the deep emotion of witnessing new Canadians swearing their oath.

In October, each year, the Government of Canada celebrates immigration throughout the country during citizenship week. Campaigns like “Welcome Home” and “Canada—All Together” are full of warmth, authenticity, creativity, and so on. They promote respect, freedom, a sense of belonging, and the basic values of the Canadian society.

• (1650)

[*English*]

Nevertheless, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration would like to inquire, with all due respect, where the member opposite has been during the debate of the new Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. The new act goes much further than to simply celebrate immigration as a cornerstone of Canada. The government has entrenched not just immigration but its sister notion, refugee protection, in legislation that will, in the matter of a few months, carry the full weight of law. I think those of us who were in committee were witnesses to that fact.

Let us look at some of the stated objectives of the act. Among them were: to enrich and strengthen the social and cultural fabric of Canadian society while respecting the federal, bilingual and multicultural character of the country; to see that families are reunited in Canada; to promote the successful integration of permanent residents into Canada; to support by means of consistent standards and prompt processing, which I believe will be improved with this new law, the attainment of immigration goals; to facilitate the entry of visitors, students and temporary workers; to work in co-operation with the provinces to secure better recognition of the foreign credentials of permanent residents and their more rapid integration; and finally, to promote international justice and security by fostering respect for human rights and by denying access to criminals.

These are only a few of the selected objectives of the act which have entrenched respect for diversity and humanity in our immigration practices. It is plain that there is no need to restore for what is not lost. In case the specific objectives of the act are not clear, let us review the key principles and values that define Canadian society, the same principles and values that defined the process of legislative review.

First, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms is the test for equality and freedom from discrimination. Is immigration a cornerstone of Canada? What better proof could a person ask for than the charter itself?

There are other principles that define Canada and the new act: respect for the multicultural character of Canada; commitments to human rights, including concordance with international human rights; and the integration of immigrants into Canadian society. On this point the government is committed to working in co-operation with provinces to secure better recognition of the foreign credentials of permanent residents. This will allow immigrants to settle and become established more readily.

Supply

Canadians do celebrate immigration. Let there be no doubt in anyone's mind that the intent of the government's immigration legislation is to continue the Canadian tradition of welcoming diversity, not just tolerance but harmony.

• (1655)

[*Translation*]

There have been ongoing consultations since the bill was introduced, one year ago. The standing committee has heard from more than 100 groups involved in immigration and refugee protection in Ottawa and across the country. The standing committee tabled a report, entitled “Refugee Protection and Border Security”, in the House in March 2000. The title of this report summarizes part of the issues studied by the Government of Canada.

We have seen the objectives and the principles that guided us in order to ensure that the process was open, public and transparent. This process led to the new legislation which is clearly based on the respect of diversity and humanity.

The new legislation simplifies the refugee determination process, but continues to protect the grounds for determining refugee status, refugee status under the Geneva convention: risk of torture, risk to their life or the risk of cruel and unusual treatment or punishment.

For years, the reunification of families has been a cornerstone of Canada's immigration policy. This is indeed good, as the family represents a key element in Canadian society, in fact, it constitutes the core of society. It is families that built Canada and that will continue to build Canada in the future. The reunification of families is an integral part of Canada's immigration policy.

Canadians have always thought that immigrants to Canada will settle more easily if they have the support of their extended family. That is why our immigration and refugee protection policies encourage and support the sponsorship of family members. This is a humanitarian gesture.

This bill expands the family class and makes it a fundamental element and one of the main classes of immigrants. For the first time, parents are mentioned in the definition of the family class outlined in the bill.

[*English*]

I believe the new act will facilitate family reunification. It simplifies application for landing spouses, partners and children who are already in Canada legally by creating an in Canada landing class so they do not have to first leave the country to apply. This is a good measure.

I will conclude by saying that our committee has other work but I am convinced that the new immigration law will facilitate the processes we need to readily improve our immigration policies.

Supply

Mr. Dick Proctor (Palliser, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the elaboration that the member opposite has made on immigration particularly, but I wonder if he would give us his thoughts, as a veteran member of the House, on a couple of other points that are in our 12 point program, specifically on strengthening the role of aboriginal, Metis and Inuit people in the Canadian family. I would like some elaboration on that because some of us are quite concerned that there has been so little apparent action since the report of the royal commission, *Gathering Strength*, was released a few years back.

The other point on which I would be interested in hearing from the member would be point number 11, which talks about strengthening pluralistic and democratic discourse by means of appropriate regulation to limit media concentration. Earlier a member from the Alliance had a different spin on that, but we are kind of coming at it from the old Tom Kent notion that there should be a royal commission to deal with media concentration. We are seeing more of it, not less, in the country.

I would be interested in hearing what the hon. member opposite has to say on those two points.

• (1700)

Mr. Mark Assad: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. I will address both his points.

First, regarding aboriginal issues, I was impressed by a book I read some years ago called *Drum Beat* which talked about aboriginals and the problems that exist in Canada. There is no doubt there is room for improvement in the matter.

Needless to say, my knowledge is limited on the subject but the book brought up aspects of the issue I had never known about. It was a bit disturbing to read about the lack of understanding and how aboriginals have been treated in the past. Their culture was established long before we came. When we came along we wanted to fit the original Canadians into our mould.

When we attempted to do this it created many problems, there is no doubt about it. We have a lot to correct in that regard. The problem dates back many years. The fact that we tried to impose our ways did not help much but I think it is an issue we will be able to resolve in time.

Second, point number 11 in the NDP plan talks about media concentration. I have always felt there is a danger to democratic society when media are concentrated in too few hands. In the last couple of years many Canadians have been concerned about the issue including me. If there is any danger in a democracy it is when there is too much concentration. We must be vigilant at all times to make sure it does not happen to us. It is extremely vital for the government to keep an eye on the issue at all times.

Mr. John Bryden (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Aldershot, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am really pleased to have the opportunity to speak to this motion because it gives me a chance to submit a kind of wish list, the 12 things that I would do if I was Prime Minister, so the opposition will just have to bear with me as I go through because they have had their opportunity to say what they would do if they formed the government.

If I led a government on this side what I would first do is reform the Access to Information Act and the Privacy Act. That is number one. These two bits of legislation, when they were originally introduced, the Access to Information Act in 1983, it was the second piece of legislation of its kind in the world, the second freedom of information legislation.

Now, it is sad to say it is now lagging behind just about every freedom of information legislation elsewhere in the world, and similarly the Privacy Act. It is most important and in the interests of the nation to amend both pieces of legislation in order not only to enhance the public's right to know but to create efficiencies in government in order to make Canada a globally competitive nation.

Secondly, I would write legislation requiring charities to be answerable in terms of transparency and corporate governance. We have a \$100 billion industry, actually a \$122 billion industry if we count the non profit organizations, that is run without any kind of legislative transparency whatsoever.

We know anecdotally that there are problems all through that industry. We know of small scam charities, but most importantly the large hospitals, the health care institutions in this country which spend some \$40 billion a year are charities, and they are not transparent or they are not required to conform to legislative standards of corporate governance. I believe if they were then our problems with financing health care would be solved because we would save billions if only we could rein in the way administrators manage the health care industry. I just in passing point out that the CEO of the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto, for example, makes \$500,000 a year, twice that of the Prime Minister.

Thirdly, I would amend the old Bill C-31, the amendment to the Indian Act that was passed in 1985 that created over 100,000 new Indians, many of them with no connection to reserves, no connections to their Indian heritage whatsoever. It was intended to correct a problem with respect to the spouses of people who married off the reserve. It has created a nightmare where we are now passing in the House race based legislation that discriminates based on race in our urban communities.

I was the only one on this side of the House to vote against the youth justice bill Senate amendments that came to the House because what they did is they required the courts to consider race, whether a person is an aboriginal or not, in sentencing and I would say that is unacceptable.

Fourthly, the federal government must rein in gambling. It is an issue that is not talked about at all in the House anymore but you will remember that a change in the criminal code actually has passed to the provinces this incredible cash cow which is called casino gambling and video lottery terminals. This has now created a \$27 billion industry, if we will, that preys on the weaknesses of our fellow Canadians.

Supply

I have travelled around the country and I always go to casinos to see what the casinos are like, and each of those casinos preys on a different sector of the community, and for example the casino in Winnipeg has video lottery terminals that are operated by a nickel. In other words, the clientele in Winnipeg is not sufficiently wealthy to put in \$1 or \$5 so the terminals are directed towards getting the money from the people on social welfare, the really poor people, and so we have nickel terminals and we are creating a massive addiction.

The provinces are pretending that this is okay because they are taking the profits and giving them to charities, and I deplore the fact that charities are financing themselves on money that is obviously coming from people who are either addicted or cannot afford the losses that they incur when they go to casino gambling.

• (1705)

Fifthly, I would change the general federal policy with respect to aboriginal affairs. We have to look at it again because what has happened is that it is not working. I spent three years on the Indian and Northern Affairs committee and my heart really went out to the witnesses from the various aboriginal communities across the country that came to the committee. Something is very, very wrong with our policy because what we are doing is we are creating a culture of dependence rather than a culture of pride. That should be a number one priority for any new government, to actually come back and re-examine where we are going wrong in our aboriginal affairs policy.

Sixth, I would revisit the Supreme Court Act. This parliament forgets that the supreme court is beneath parliament. In other words parliament is the supreme court of this land, not like in the United States. We have the supreme court making decisions when it does not even have a majority of the judges onside, decisions that the Government of Canada interprets as binding decisions, as binding interpretations of the charter of rights and freedoms.

Madam Speaker, I should tell you that the supreme court judges themselves can make these incredibly important decisions based on only three hours of testimony, most of the work actually being done by law clerks. We have to take a look as a parliament and satisfy ourselves that the supreme court is serving the nation the way it must.

Seventh, on that note I think we should return to the Singh decision. The Singh decision was a Supreme Court of Canada minority decision in the mid-1980s that the Government of Canada has used as justification for saying that anyone who lands on Canadian soil, any foreign alien, must be treated as though that person were a citizen and have access to all due processes of law and all the benefits of Canadian society.

Madam Speaker, if you actually examined the Singh decision you would find real doubt that this was the intention of the court at the time, but we have to go back to that because we are one of the few nations in the world where foreign aliens can come onto our soil and have all the rights of citizenship. We have to address that problem because it is causing all kinds of difficulties in immigration and refugee policy.

Number eight, I would take back the tax points that we have given to the provinces on health care. We have to take control of health

care in the provinces because what we know as a federal parliament is we are putting money out to the provinces for health care and they are using it in other ways, so we have to get control of health care spending. We have to make the medical health of Canadians a federal responsibility centrally because I believe the provinces are failing in their obligation in that regard, and they are forever saying that the federal government is not giving enough to the provinces but in fact if we took back the tax points that we have given the provinces I think we would more than bring the spending on health care under control, and we could combine that with better transparency with hospital administration.

Number nine, I would declare that Canada is indivisible. I was never comfortable with the clarity bill in its suggestion, and it is a suggestion only, that this House could actually decide that one province or another could walk away from the Confederation. As a government or a prime minister I would say simply that as long as I was around and as long as my government was around this would never be on the table. This is one country.

Number ten, I would dump our equity employment policy and all gender based government programs. Our gender based programs were brought in way back in 1973 as a result of a report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women. In 1973 they were undoubtedly relevant but they are not relevant in 2002. I do not believe the women of this country by and large, by the grand large, actually feel that they have to be treated in special fashion. They do not. This is a land in which there is equality of opportunity regardless of gender, and I think it is a disgrace that we suggest that women are in some way inferior and that they have to have special treatment, so I would scrap that entire program.

• (1710)

Concerning number 11, I would dismantle the arm's length agencies like the CRTC. Here again there has been a long policy of the government avoiding its responsibility and its accountability.

The last one is that I would change the oath of citizenship so that it reflected the values of Canadians, the values of the charter of rights and freedoms.

Mr. Dick Proctor (Palliser, NDP): Madam Speaker, there were a number of things I would have liked to question the member on.

Let me instead just say that I think Canadians are increasingly concerned about the lack of sovereignty in this country. They are worried about the rate at which our resources are being acquired particularly by American investors. This has been happening for some time, but the rate at which it is happening now in the wake of the Free Trade Agreement and the North American Free Trade Agreement is growing cause for alarm. For example, something in the neighbourhood of only 27% of our oil and gas industry is now actually owned and controlled by Canadian companies as the Americans are moving in.

In the 12 points that are related here we can think of the massive subsidies that are being paid to the United States farm agribusiness industry which are not available here in Canada. That is not because we do not have the resources. It is because we do not have the political will to do it, and our farmers are rapidly—

Privilege

● (1715)

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): It being 5.15 p.m., pursuant to order made on Wednesday, February 27, 2002, all questions necessary to dispose of the business of supply are deemed put, a recorded division is deemed demanded and deferred until Tuesday, March 12, 2002, at the end of the period provided for government orders .

[English]

Mr. Bryon Wilfert: Madam Speaker, if you would seek it, I am sure you would find that there is consent to see the clock as 5.30 p. m. in order to begin private members' business.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): Is there agreement?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): We will see the clock as 5.30 p.m.

It being 5.30, the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

CANADIAN ALLIANCE COMMUNICATIONS MATERIAL

Mr. Joe Jordan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege on which I had given prior notice to the Chair. It concerns communications materials that have been put in the public domain that I feel reflect on the dignity of the House.

The first such document is a press release which comes from the Canadian Alliance website. It concerns the ongoing committee deliberations, initiated by the Canadian Alliance and referred by you to the standing committee, on the issue of conflicting statements by the Minister of National Defence. The press release dated February 26 begins by stating:

It is clear that Minister of Defence Art Eggleton deliberately misled the House of Commons when he changed his story about when he knew about the full details of capture and turnover of prisoners—

The press release goes on to quote several hon. members of this Chamber. It states:

"The Minister's feeble defence that he did not fully understand the extent of Canadian involvement has been shot full of holes by a senior military commander," said Canadian Alliance Foreign Affairs Critic Brian Pallister.

It goes on to state:

"The evidence is now very clear that Minister Eggleton deliberately misled the House of Commons and Canadians," said Leon Benoit—

The Speaker: The hon. parliamentary secretary must refrain from using the names of members in reading. I know he is reading a press release and I know the names appear in the press release. However under the rules of the House we cannot do indirectly what we cannot do directly and one of the things we cannot do directly is say the name. I know he will want to insert the appropriate nomenclature in his remarks. I let it go once or twice and I think we should stop it.

Mr. Joe Jordan: I apologize, Mr. Speaker. I thought it was okay if I was quoting. I will refrain from doing it.

It states further:

"The evidence is now very clear that (the Minister of National Defence) deliberately misled the House of Commons...", said (the member for Lakeland).

(The hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke) added, "I hope that (the Minister of National Defence) will now be willing to come forward and admit that his misleading statements were indeed intentional. Now that his explanation has been contradicted, the right thing to do would be to admit that he deliberately misled the House of Commons, and Canadians".

I am now quoting from a CBC interview transcript with the hon. member for Lakeland. The questioner asked the hon. member for Lakeland:

We discovered yesterday it took three briefings or three reminders before the Defence Minister clicked, as it were, as to what happened and when. What does that say to you?

The hon. member for Lakeland replied:

Well, I would say what he clicked on is that the Chief of Defence Staff and Deputy Chief of Defence Staff were not going to lie for him on this issue. That's what clicked...The Minister understood things perfectly because he asked questions to clarify. So the Minister knew. He misled Parliament and Canadians through Parliament. To me, that's the issue.

Mr. Speaker, I am now quoting from a transcript of February 1 of a media scrum that took place outside the House of Commons foyer. It involves the hon. member for Portage—Lisgar. The question was:

It's a pretty serious charge that the Prime Minister is lying. What evidence do you have?

The member for Portage—Lisgar stated:

—I cannot believe and I would not want the troops and their families to believe that the Prime Minister was totally unaware for over (a) week of an issue so important to Canada and internationally so important.

The next question was:

You're saying more than that, you're saying he's lying are you not?

The answer from the member for Portage—Lisgar:

I'm asserting that he was aware of this information.

Mr. Speaker, I would add that the Prime Minister had denied both in the House and in public that he was not aware and that is a direct public contradiction of the statements by the Prime Minister of Canada.

I am now quoting from another Alliance press release dated February 22. It involves a quote from the member for Portage—Lisgar:

After concealing this controversial information for eight days, the Minister then gave false information to the House of Commons about when he first learned of the event. It defies reason to suggest that this was an innocent coincidence of honest mistakes. All evidence suggests that the Minister deliberately concealed important information, first through silence, and then through false statements.

Mr. Speaker, the collection of information, and it is not an inclusive list, demonstrates that even though when a member brings a question of privilege, at that particular time and during that motion, as I am doing now, the member is allowed to use a term like misleading the House. That language is not allowed in parliament under normal circumstances and the fact that this charge has been made in the House and referred to committee I would suggest does not give licence for members to be repeating these things outside the House. That is one of the issues here.

I am quoting now from *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*, second edition by Joseph Maingot, page 254, under the heading "Reflections on Members and on the House". It states:

Language spoken during a Parliamentary proceeding that impugns the integrity of members would be unparliamentary and a breach of order contrary to the Standing Orders. But not a breach of privilege.

We find that many times in this House, Mr. Speaker, that you are required to point out to members that their language is not appropriate and in most circumstances they retract the statements. Maingot further states:

Spoken outside the House by a Member the same language reflecting on the Member's Parliamentary capacity would be considered contempt of the House.

Mr. Speaker, I realize that members speak outside this place at their own peril.

• (1720)

There is certainly legal recourse that is available to the offended party. I would also suggest that in my reading of procedure, the Canadian precedents as opposed to the U.K. precedents, even if the offended member chooses the courts as a recourse, it does not preclude this issue being undertaken by the House. In my view it is an offence that would simply be corrected by a retraction and an apology by the offending members.

My final point is that I was a little uncomfortable with the timing of this question of privilege. As we are aware, this issue, the larger issue of the conflicting statements which these comments reference is before the procedure and House affairs committee. I would find no issue with putting this off until that committee has completed its work. The reason I brought it forward today was I felt I had an obligation as a member of the House to bring it to the attention of the House at the earliest opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, should you find that I have a question of privilege, I would be prepared to move the necessary motion.

Mr. Darrel Stinson (Okanagan—Shuswap, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for your time and indulgence in this matter.

As the member across the way has stated, this issue is being dealt with in committee. I would think that is where it should be dealt with first. Then if necessary, it should come before the House.

I believe the members who were mentioned in the member's question of privilege should have the opportunity to be heard by the Speaker before the decision is made.

• (1725)

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would simply like to bring to your attention the fact that, without taking a position on the merit of the question that was raised, I find it quite strange that a member of parliament who is also a member of the committee studying the matter would rise a question of privilege in the House at the very moment where this committee is meeting. I am also a member of this committee. To have an informed debate on the question of privilege that was raised, it would have been normal and more courteous to do so when the people involved would have had the opportunity of making themselves heard on this question of privilege in this place before you made a decision.

Privilege

Therefore, I am extremely disappointed with the behaviour of a member questioning the good faith of other members with regard to their speaking order, when he himself is rising at the very moment when the committee is taking some important decisions concerning the work that lays ahead.

I am not saying this question has no merit. It is up to you to decide. I am simply wondering about this, and I find the member's intentions dubious, because he is rising at a time when all the other colleagues involved are working on the matter.

Mr. André Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska, PC/DR): Mr. Speaker, I would like to join my voice to that of my colleague from the Bloc Québécois regarding the timing chosen by the government member to raise this question of privilege. While recognizing of course your authority in this matter, I would remind you that it looks like a case of what is good for the goose is good for the gander. The member gave several examples of things that have been said outside the House about the Minister of National Defence.

May I point out that the Minister of National Defence himself makes comments outside the House, talks to reporters, even says that he is willing to go back before the committee and analyzes the evidence given in committee by the two highest ranked officers at DND. So if there is someone to blame, it should be the Minister of National Defence, who himself talks outside the House about what is going on in committee.

I think it is a matter of credibility. Moreover, it was bad timing to raise this question of privilege at this time. However, I will repeat that what is good for the goose is good for the gander.

[English]

Mr. Joe Jordan: Mr. Speaker, I thought I made it clear, and I am not insensitive to the timing issue, but my read of the precedents in these sorts of issues is that I have a responsibility to bring it before the House at the earliest opportunity. I qualified that with the notion that I have absolutely no objection to this issue being dealt with at another time. Certainly the people mentioned should be present. I just felt I needed to get it in the parliamentary queue.

On the other point about the committee dealing with this, I would suggest that this is a separate question of privilege. It should be introduced in the House. That is the appropriate forum for it. The committee does not decide these issues; the House decides these issues.

Mr. Speaker, I feel that I have acted appropriately by bringing it to your attention at this time and in this way.

[Translation]

The Speaker: The Chair appreciates, as always, the comments made by the members on this matter.

[English]

I agree with the hon. member for Okanagan—Shuswap that his colleagues who have been named in the question of privilege raised by the parliamentary secretary ought to have an opportunity to respond. Of course the Chair is most willing, and anxious indeed, to hear from them on this point.

Private Members' Business

I will consider the matter closed for the moment until we have an opportunity for them to come to the House. I appreciate the argument made by the parliamentary secretary that he has raised this at the earliest opportunity as required by the rules. That is why he has raised it today. We will hear more on the point, I am sure. I intend to do so whenever we are able to arrange for the hon. members involved to make their points. We will hear from them.

Therefore for the moment the matter is closed and we will proceed with the business before the House, namely private members' business.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1730)

[Translation]

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Guy St-Julien (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik, Lib.) moved:

Motion No. 217

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should introduce legislation to put in place a federal economic development initiative for the regions of Abitibi, Lac-St-Jean-Saguenay, James Bay, Nunavik, the North Shore, the Gaspé and the Îles de la Madeleine.

He said: During the last federal election, I declared the following to the population and the media, and I quote:

A new federal economic development initiative should be put in place by Industry Canada in northern Quebec, along the lines of FEDNOR in northern Ontario and ACOA in the Atlantic region.

The mandate would be to promote economic growth, diversification, jobs creation and long term autonomy for communities in northern Quebec, in co-operation with community partners and other organizations, in order to improve access to capital, to information and to markets.

The new agency's mandate would be to improve the economy of the various communities in northern Quebec by encouraging the start up of businesses and the creation of job opportunities in Abitibi, James Bay, Nunavik and Témiscamingue.

Later, when the House reconvened after the election campaign, in January or February 2001, I moved Motion M-217.

When he was in New Brunswick 15 days ago, the federal Minister of Finance and member for LaSalle—Émard said to the population that his next budget would contain specific new measures for the economic development of large urban centres and regions. He also said that it was the Canadian government's responsibility to create infrastructure and development programs but that their implementation would be based on local initiatives.

Since the election campaign, in 2001, and mainly this year, following the statements by the Minister of Finance, I anticipated this initiative thanks to messages from people in our region.

For years, I have been asking in this House, in the caucus of the Liberal Party of Canada and the Quebec Liberal caucus, as well as elsewhere in Ottawa, Abitibi, James Bay and Nunavik, for a better quality of life on behalf on the residents of resource based regions.

The Minister of Finance said that it would be up to the people living in those regions to get their message across. Since the people

living in Abitibi-Témiscamingue, James Bay and Nunavik are ready, I want to pass on the following messages, which are dated.

On November 29, 2001, the Val-d'Or Chamber of Commerce, through its president, Jacques Talbot, wrote the former Minister of National Revenue and Secretary of State for Economic Development Canada, the Liberal member for Outremont. In this letter, the Chamber of Commerce wrote as follows:

The executive of the Val-d'Or Chamber of Commerce is writing this letter in order to request that you give special consideration to the regions of Abitibi-Témiscamingue and northern Quebec and give serious thought to the possibility of taking energetic steps to revive the economy of these regions.

Even the Val-d'Or Chamber of Commerce received the virtual message from the Minister of Finance on Valentine's Day, in which he made the statement in New Brunswick that in the next budget it would be necessary to make a distinction between urban centres and the regions.

Continuing with the letter:

We realize that you are aware that Abitibi-Témiscamingue is going through an extremely difficult time: very high unemployment rate, brain drain, our young people moving away, weakness of the natural resource sector and so on. You have also been made aware, during your frequent trips through the region, of the efforts being made by local and regional leaders who are taking many steps to diversify and revive our economy.

The Val-d'Or Chamber of Commerce wishes to see the creation of a federal economic development initiative for Abitibi-Témiscamingue and northern Quebec. Its mandate would be to promote economic growth, diversification, job creation, and the long term autonomy of this part of the province of Quebec.

Like FedNor or ACOA, such an agency could address such issues as connectivity, innovation, trade, specific investment programs, entrepreneurship, skill upgrading, community economic development, access to capital and information, community partnerships, while reflecting the hard work and the determination of the people of Abitibi-Témiscamingue and northern Quebec to succeed and prosper in the regions.

These are letters from the local people, bearing a message for their MP. They are telling him, "You need to pass this message on to the Government of Canada".

• (1735)

In that same letter, Mr. Talbot wrote:

We know that the federal economic development initiative for northern Ontario is constantly expanding in terms of developing new programs, introducing new partners and increasing funding for Ontario's northern communities. FedNor is directly investing over \$45 million annually, through programs and services that provide economic benefits to northern communities, in addition to another \$18 million through the provincial network of Community Futures Development Corporations.

He goes on to say:

Rest assured that the Val d'Or chamber of commerce is pleased with the success of the federal economic development initiative for northern Ontario and the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, since their creation, in 1987. However, we are firmly convinced that the Abitibi-Témiscamingue and its population, which is known for its determination and its reputation as builders, as well as the population of northern region of the province, deserve as much consideration on the part of the federal government.

I carry on with an excerpt from another letter dated January 21, 2002. This is getting close to Valentine's Day when the Minister of Finance said in the Atlantic region that "the next budget will make a distinction between major urban centres and regions". This letter is from the new Mayor of Saint-Marc de Figueray, Gilles Corriveau, who wrote:

Private Members' Business

I will tell you that the economy is very depressed and fragile, the reason being that, in our region, mines are not doing well because of the price of gold. The lumber industry is in no better shape, because of the surtax imposed by our neighbours to the south.

Therefore, in our small municipality, we promote tourism and the construction of new houses on the shores of our lakes.

It is for these reasons that they want the federal government to get involved. I have another letter dated January 30, 2002—we are getting closer to February 14, when the federal Minister of Finance made his statement—from the Senneterre economic development corporation. It is signed by its president, Claude Castonguay. He says the following:

First, asking the federal government to initiate things, to develop strategies and to stimulate economic development in the Abitibi-Témiscamingue, perfectly reflects our organization's expectations from the government. All too often, the regions are left out in the government's major policies, and it is important that our members of parliament speak out loud and clear on behalf of the regions.

However, the federal government already has CFDCs and a Canada Economic Development office on our territory. Is it necessary to create another structure? What will happen to existing agencies? Instead, the federal government should increase the budgets of these organizations, allow for the hiring of staff specialized in potential future industries for our region, and improve incentives.

Mr. Castonguay goes on to say:

The government must also work even more closely with the municipalities. Economic development is not only measured by job creation. The development of municipal infrastructure, support for local business, improvements to leisure infrastructure are also elements that have a positive impact on business but also on quality of life for citizens.

The objective that you are pursuing is commendable: making the regions a priority for the Government of Canada. We would save time by providing the organizations that are already in place the tools required for development.

I am getting close to February 14. It is now February 11. The Comité Urgence Amos-Région states, by the pen of our good friend François Lemire:

Allow us to bring to your attention the following statement—

It is important to fully understand this.

—taken from part III, the Report on Plans and Priorities of Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions, on page 15.

We all know that this document is a pale blue book. There were others that were tabled this morning under the heading “Supplementary Estimates”. It states:

“The transition to a knowledge-based economy is a priority issue which Quebec has to continue to confront in order to continue its development. The nature of this challenge depends on the region concerned”.

The report continues as follows:

“The remote regions depend more on the exploitation of natural resources, and are thus directly affected by economic cycles and the vagaries of the international situation. A substantial portion of the regions in question are likely to see the dynamics of development driving the current restructuring of the Canadian economy pass them by”.

This is written in this document produced by our government. I will read further:

“Some remote regions are currently experiencing considerable difficulties owing to the unfavourable situation in many resource sectors, and seem little able to benefit substantially from these emerging new sectors, including those associated with new information technology”.

“—these regions are facing two levels of difficulty. First, the loss of the upcoming generation discourages the establishment of new firms requiring new skills. Second, the aging of the population, which in many communities is already presenting serious challenges with respect to maintaining services—”.

● (1740)

And the president continues:

We understand that the Government of Canada is aware of the problems and the threats that we are facing. In this regard, we believe that it is urgent to create an economic development initiative that will allow a good complementarity with programs and services already provided by Canada Economic Development.

In particular, this should translate into a decentralization of federal budgets and human resources now dedicated to regions and managed from urban centres.

Even before the Minister of Finance made his statement, the people from the Amos area had already anticipated what would happen several days before. The president continues by mentioning:

It is imperative that these be managed by the regions themselves and that this management be done according to the specific needs of each region.

We all know that the survival of our regions depends on some fundamental elements that we must hasten to apply for the next generations:

Top notch educational and research activities on our natural resources, to develop niches for secondary and tertiary processing, and also develop a strong and continuing world class network of expertise allowing us to stand out and thus ensure our survival as a region;

Presence of effective liaison and transfer agencies such as the centres for transfer and industrial research;

Development of a qualified workforce for the establishment of a partnership of adequate funding of educational institutions;

Support in business development through the technical support provided by specialists;

Support to business development through tailored funding services.

The president continues:

We therefore strongly believe that this initiative must have the aforementioned as its primary objectives and must make it possible for a region like ours, with a fair allocation of funds and the decentralization of federal funds, to draw up its own socioeconomic development plan and to equip itself with the means to achieve its objectives.

Needless to say, this cannot be done unless there is also a decentralization of departments and the specialists who work in them, as well as the tailoring of governmental programs to our specific realities.

Moreover, who better than us can understand our situation and find the solutions that suit us. We are a dynamic region, one that is capable and anxious to take control and is also prepared to work in collaboration with your government in the creation and implementation of such an initiative, which will truly respond to the needs of the resource regions.

We are getting up to February 14, when we recall the Minister of Finance said “The federal budget will have to come from the regions”. In this respect, on February 13, I received a letter from the executive director of the Malartic chamber of commerce, Nicole Lamirande, and its president, Camil Palin. It read as follows:

Malartic being a small municipality in which most jobs are related to forestry or mining, we feel it is vital for action to be taken. The economy is already precarious, and everything possible must be done to bolster it. We are therefore counting on you, Mr. St-Julien, to do what is necessary.

This is what is important. The last letter is after February 14. It comes from the chamber of commerce and industry of Rouyn-Noranda and region. This is the riding next to mine, and they are interested in my motion.

The Chambre de commerce et d'industrie du Rouyn-Noranda régional wishes to inform you of its support for Motion M-217.

The chamber feels that an agency similar to FedNor but with a mandate relating solely to Quebec, particularly the resource regions, would be a key economic development initiative for a region such as ours.

Private Members' Business

We can only encourage the creation of an entity different from the present Economic Development Canada, which would have more power and a bigger budget and which would be more adapted to the specific needs of the regions. For instance, just as northeastern Ontario has received thousands of dollars from FedNor to help set up air service between Rouyn-Noranda, Earlton and Toronto (Air North link), it is time that—

The other agency is 46 feet from Rouyn-Noranda, on the border between Quebec and Ontario.

—Quebec's resource regions also received their fair share of infrastructure development assistance (assistance denied by EDC in the air carrier case mentioned above).

What is important in the speech given by the Minister of Finance on February 14? The minister understood the message perfectly well, because he has been to visit the resource regions on many occasions over the years. The key to this initiative which, according to the minister, will make a distinction between large urban centres and resource regions in the next budget, lies in the public's hands. Here is what the minister told an Acadian newspaper: "The Canadian government is responsible for being there with infrastructure and development programs, but it is local initiative which will determine how we must implement them".

That is why I brought letters today. People have written to me. It is the right time to do so. I know that my time is up, but I am counting on my right to reply to intervene later.

● (1745)

Ms. Jocelyne Girard-Bujold (Jonquière, BQ): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise in the House today to thank our colleague, the member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik, for his initiative. I very much appreciated the fact that he read letters he received from some of his eminent constituents.

His motion is extremely vague and seems useless, given the poor results of the federal government in the area of regional development.

Socioeconomic stakeholders in the various Quebec regions know quite well that the federal government's regional development policies are not effective. In fact, I would like to remind the member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik that the federal government plans around four global regions in the country: the Atlantic provinces, Quebec, Ontario and the Prairies and western Canada.

Therefore, the criteria for the policies of Canada Economic Development for the Quebec Regions are chosen as if Quebec were an homogeneous region and the situation were the same for the workers of the Gaspé peninsula and those of Montreal. Let us be serious. The situation in the Gaspé peninsula is extremely different from the situation in the Lower St. Lawrence, even though that also is an outlying region.

The Quebec government knows what is going on in every region of Quebec, it is the one in charge, it is close to the people, it understands the dynamics of the different regions and it has created the Local Development Centres and the regional consultation and development councils, which interact directly with the stakeholders in order to establish programs that are really tailored to the specific situations of each region.

Furthermore, the federal government invests very little in the Quebec regions. Let me quote some figures. I would like to mention how much income tax Quebec taxpayers have to pay in the six regions where my colleague would want us to invest in a new system, and how much the federal government invested in fixed assets in 1999.

In Abitibi-Témiscamingue, people paid \$298,398,000 in personal income taxes to Ottawa; federal spending in that region amounted to \$964,000. In the Lower St. Lawrence and Gaspé region, taxpayers paid \$297,810,000 in personal income taxes to Ottawa; the federal government spent only \$9,000 in capital expenditures. The North Shore taxpayers paid the federal government \$223,576,000 in personal income taxes in 1998; they got \$8 million in investments. Taxpayers from the Gaspé and Îles de la Madeleine region paid to Ottawa \$143,277,000 in personal income taxes; they got \$389,000 in capital expenditures from the federal government in 1999. Northern Quebec paid Ottawa \$56,199,000 in personal income taxes in 1998; it got \$2 million. Taxpayers of the Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean region, which I represent, gave \$508,474,000 and got \$763,000 in federal investments in 1999.

Given those figures, allow me to tell my colleague from Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik that he is proposing to duplicate the Quebec government mandate with regard to regional development. I think he should tell that to his government.

I listened carefully as he read from all those letters; most of the stakeholders who wrote to him said the same thing I am telling him. It is up to the regions to say what they want. The Quebec government invested money in the regions. It is also up to the Government of Canada to give back roughly one-quarter of the income taxes owed to each region of Quebec.

● (1750)

Last year, I took part in the Congrès des régions which took place in North Montreal. For the three days the conference took place, all of the participants spoke about the type of development they wished to see in their regions. They recognized the legitimacy of only one government, the Government of Quebec. They also said that the federal government should return their money, their taxes, to the province so that it could distribute it to the regions concerned for regional development.

This goes to show the extent to which the member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik is going in the opposite direction to what the regional stakeholders want.

I would also like to provide other examples of measures taken by Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions that have harmed the regions. In 2000, Ottawa cut \$51 million from regional development in Quebec, \$35 million of which was done under the Small Business Loans Act.

If the member is truly concerned about the importance of regional development, he should realize that it is his own government's policies that are killing Quebec's regions. We need only think of the unacceptable measures contained in the EI system.

The government robbed \$43 billion from the EI fund. It implemented measures that penalize seasonal workers who live in regions. Who is responsible for our regions losing out even more? It is this government, with its drastic changes to the EI fund and measures made to modify the fund and EI benefits.

Every week I receive calls and letters asking the government to amend the current Employment Insurance Act to help them out. The Liberal government's response to these people is no.

The same can be said for air travel in the regions. The federal government is unable to ensure quality service to the regions, and companies like Air Canada and its subsidiaries call all the shots. Air transportation is an area of responsibility that comes under the federal government, but it is not even able to assume this responsibility.

Air Canada and its subsidiaries are increasing their fares and reducing their services; in short, they do not care about the regions, and the federal government is doing nothing to stop this sad situation. It is a real farce. Air Nova has dropped its services between Baie-Comeau and Quebec City. At Bagotville airport, one flight was dropped at the end of last year. Moreover, the government has the nerve to impose a surtax on air fares and to state that Canadians and Quebecers agree with that.

I would also like to talk about the cuts made by this government since 1994 in health transfers. At least \$1 billion was cut in the health sector in Quebec. For my region alone, it is a cut of \$38 million. Just imagine how many jobs could be created in my region with \$38 million. It is more or less the budget of the Jonquiere hospital.

But no. The government, of which our colleague from Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik is a member, is depriving Quebec of that money. If the member really wants to promote regional development in Quebec, he should wake the finance minister up to ask him to give us our money back. He should then say the same thing to the intergovernmental affairs minister.

For the last three weeks, we have talked a lot in the House about the promises made in the last federal election. As the member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik pointed out, lots of promises were made. They promised \$3.4 billions for the highways in Quebec alone. Unfortunately, there is only \$108 million on the table. What a farce.

• (1755)

This government is not working for the regions, nor is it working for Quebec. This government is working for itself and for its own image. When this government starts to respect the people from the regions and tell them “it is up to you to decide” I might begin to believe it. Unfortunately, this is not going to happen tomorrow.

[English]

Mr. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, Motion No. 217 calls for the government to introduce legislation to put in place a federal economic development initiative for the regions of Abitibi, Lac-St-Jean-Saguenay, James Bay, Nunavik, the North Shore, the Gaspé and the Îles de la Madeleine.

Private Members' Business

While we understand the intent of this motion, which is to improve the health and welfare and economic prosperity of the people who live in those regions, really what the member is asking for is something that comes under different guises, often economic development, regional prosperity and diversification. The motion is asking the federal government to use taxpayers' money to try to create jobs in these regions.

There are many examples of this, such as Western Economic Diversification and ACOA, the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency. The hallmark of all of these, though, is that they are a grossly inefficient and wasteful use of the taxpayers' money. I will describe 13 reasons why this motion is flawed and why this way of using the taxpayers' money is completely and utterly inefficient.

First, this kind of distribution of money basically says that government will decide who the winners and losers are with respect to the economy. A study from Queen's University, and I will use only one study of many, showed that in 40% of the cases the government grants represented 50% of a company's net worth. In 20% of the cases the grants represented 175% of a company's net worth. Basically, it was using taxpayers' money to prop up businesses that were inefficient.

Second, this kind of use of money totally distorts the marketplace. Government assistance can entice businesses to invest in areas they would otherwise avoid like the plague.

Third, it produces a welfare mentality. It causes a dependence mentality within the business community that would not otherwise occur.

Fourth, it becomes a job redistribution scheme, not a job creation scheme.

Fifth, it puts tax dollars at risk, of which there are many examples. I looked at some of the facts. If we look at regional development Quebec, a federal program, in 1997-98 it lost \$12 million. In 1996-97, \$36.7 million was written off, and in 1995-96, \$18 million. However this program is not the most appalling. In 1997-98, ACOA, the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, lost \$65 million of taxpayers' money and in 1998-99, \$56 million. It is an utter waste of the taxpayers' money.

Sixth, it is the taxpayers' money and is it not better to use that money for things like health care, education and infrastructure rather than using it for this kind of maldistribution of moneys?

Seventh, this can force governments to put political decisions over economic ones. In other words, too often this kind of money is actually distributed not on economic grounds but on cold political grounds. While politicians are very apt to take claim for jobs that are supposedly created, they are not apt to take claim for jobs that are lost.

Private Members' Business

Eighth, these kinds of programs lack accountability. The auditor general has done extensive work on this. It has been found that too often when these moneys are actually distributed to businesses accountability is not put in place. People do not know where the money has gone, why it has gone, how it is spent or where it is spent, and objective criteria are not put in place to ensure that whatever moneys put in place are used and timelines are set to measure objective parameters that can measure success or failure.

Ninth, these subsidies in effect can become business bribes going to the business of the highest bidder. Too often government is afraid to put money into places where it will lose. It puts moneys into places that are supposedly successful and these are moneys that the companies did not need in the first place.

Tenth, this kind of maldistribution of funds stifles the entrepreneurial spirit.

Eleventh, it can promote bad business decisions.

• (1800)

In 1992 the auditor general made the following point very eloquently. He said that “when a business needs funding, banks will often only provide it if the government provides a loan guarantee”. The auditor general also stated “When a lender assumes no risk it has no incentive to lend prudently”. He noted as well that the business receiving the loan guarantees would also “assume little of the risk, but can enjoy any gains”. This principle applies not only to loan guarantees but also to any type of government assistance. Where would the money go anyway? Too often the moneys are maldistributed and go somewhere else.

Lastly, these subsidies create inefficiencies. They cause moneys to prop up businesses that few people would want. Diane Francis gave an example of the newspaper in Nova Scotia, the *Courrier de la Nouvelle-Écosse*. In 1990 that newspaper received \$400,000 from the federal government, \$250,000 from Nova Scotia and \$150,000 from Quebec. It had a circulation of 3,400 at any one time, which worked out to \$240 for every subscriber. That is not the way to create economic opportunities in any region, be it in the province of Quebec or in any part of Canada.

What the province of Quebec, and indeed the country, needs is an economic environment of good monitoring and good fiscal policy, lower taxes, a flattened or flat tax system, a system with less rules and regulations and with investment in primary health and primary education. We should also invest in research and development. If we are able to do that then we will support the underpinnings of a strong economy: research and development, education, rewarding and not penalizing innovation, and the creation of a tax system that works for people rather than one that is punitive.

Our current so-called progressive tax system is not a progressive tax system at all. It is a punitive tax system that hurts innovation. A flattened tax system is a progressive tax system because the more one earns the more one pays absolutely. It does not retard and affect innovation. That is the kind of tax system that I think we need.

Those who would argue against that would say that it hurts the poor. It will not hurt the poor if the basic minimum that people can earn before they pay taxes is actually increased. What we have always advocated is that if the basic minimum is increased it actually

enables those who are in the poor and middle classes to have more money in their pockets. If we do the economic analysis we will find that a flattened tax system with a higher basic minimum that people can earn before they pay tax actually increases the amount of money that those who are in the lower socioeconomic conditions have. Furthermore, because it does not act as a barrier or punitive measure against those who choose to innovate and create wealth, it actually provides more tax money for social programs.

What is interesting is that countries that actually lowered their tax amounts found that more money went into the public coffers and more money was available for social programs to help those who could not help themselves. Conversely, they found that if they increased the tax structure, made it more punitive and increased the tax burden on individuals and companies, there was actually less money in the public coffers.

What we have found recently is that the amount of money in the black market has actually increased quite dramatically and amounts to more than \$100 billion every year. The reason is that people are fed up with paying high taxes and they have gone underground. This actually saps and diverts from the public coffers moneys that are essential for funding programs like welfare, health care and education. It retards that.

What we are saying perhaps is counterintuitive to what one would ordinarily assume. One would assume that if taxes were increased there would actually be more money. The reason why it does not work is that those high tax structures actually retard the private sector and those private sector creators of jobs and wealth will actually go to another country or flee to another province. Time and time again that has been proven.

I ask the government not to look at this motion in its absolute, but to look at its intent as a way to create jobs and not to follow it as a way to do it, to look at good, sound monitoring and fiscal policy, the elimination of rules and regulations, the strengthening of education and the investment in appropriate infrastructure. That will enable us to have a strong economy that will help everyone.

• (1805)

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska, PC/DR): Madam Speaker, before concentrating on the motion brought forward by my colleague from Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik, I would like to condemn the comments made by my colleague from the Canadian Alliance. I think he should go on a little tour of the regions of Quebec from a tourism as well as an economic point of view.

For example, he could see that the CFDCs, which were created through the LaPrade fund, among others, thanks to the participation of both the federal and provincial governments, are necessary. To say that the tax rate will be reduced does not mean much for a region where people are not working because of the economic downturn. Of course, nothing is perfect. But we still have to recognize that the government of Quebec and all the stakeholders are doing a good job. The Government of Canada lacks vision, and I will talk about that, but the involvement of governments is necessary.

Private Members' Business

It took years and years to settle the regions. Now they are left to their own devices. Money was spent to encourage people to move to the regions. Now it is normal to provide incentives to encourage people to stay there. Governments always played a role and will continue to do so.

Having said this, I will now going back to the motion of the hon. member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik. I find that it is necessary for rural and resource regions to take charge. I hope that governments will recognize this, particularly the federal government.

The hon. member will remember that when he used to turn blue rather than red, when he was a fellow Conservative, when FedNor was created, in 1987, the Conservatives were in office. The hon. member was a fellow Conservative member representing the same region, where he is still much appreciated by the people. At the time, there was the whole issue of designated areas, resource areas.

For example, my region is not in the north. I come from an asbestos town, Asbestos, of which I was the mayor for 11 years. A television series on the 1949 strike is just beginning. People should watch it.

At the time, the government said, “We must get involved in resource regions, in designated areas, in regions that have needs”. That resulted in the creation of a number of tools. That government had vision. The economic context was unfavorable; there were economic crises, downturns and recessions.

Today, the vast majority of CFDCs, which used to be CFCs, work well. The famous LaPrade fund, the Richmond—Wolfe industrial development fund, named after the former name of my riding, needs money. It is one of the funds that works best to help small businesses come start up and expand, or make it through a difficult period. The Centre d'aide aux entreprises du Val-Saint-François was also refused the help that it asked for.

Yes, the CFDC in Asbestos did get additional help, but it still needs financial assistance. It is working well. Things are not perfect, but it is operating well.

However, a vision is necessary. It must be recognized that northern Quebec—and I agree with the hon. member on this—has a specific problem. These are resource regions and they are far from major urban centres. The Lac-Saint-Jean region is one of the country's beautiful regions, but it is remote. For example, if we talk about transportation costs, there is an additional cost, but it is a societal choice and governments must recognize this and get involved.

The member spoke about St. Valentine's Day; if he can convince his colleagues to invest more in the regions, of course we will support him. But care must be taken to avoid duplication, as the Bloc Québécois member so eloquently said. We need to look at what the federal government is doing, particularly with the Canada-Quebec agreement on employability measures. There are fewer problems. The federal government is providing financial support. As for subsidies, I think that the Canadian Alliance should stop using this word, because this is financial assistance of various sorts, but primarily in the form of loans.

The main reason is that, with the free trade agreement, there are consequences. If a subsidy is provided, and a company performs so well that it exports to the United States, this is direct government assistance and the company can have trouble exporting its products. We see what this can do with Bombardier and Embraer in terms of loans.

• (1810)

The system has changed and evolved because of globalization. Now, loans are made with or without a moratorium on the capital and on the interest, depending on the organization. Quebec is still ill-equipped financially, despite what the Government of Quebec has done.

I am not accusing the Government of Quebec, but the facts speak for themselves. I do not live in the beautiful regions of northern Quebec. I live 45 minutes from Sherbrooke. We have an asbestos mine. Since it is the only asbestos mine that has not been nationalized, if we do not help it out, it is not going to make it.

It is great that a television series has been made about a city which changed the entire labour movement in Quebec and in part of Canada, but unless it gets a financial and political boost to its working capital, it will go under.

My Liberal colleague from Frontenac—Mégantic is doing a very good job. A policy on the use of asbestos would cost nothing. We are still waiting for such a policy. I hope that the government will move quickly on this, and I am confident that it will do so.

So, there are resource regions, rural regions, single industry economies and dual industry economies. After two and a half years of efforts and investments on the part of municipalities—I was a mayor and warden in those days—we finally attracted an industry tailored to our strengths and weaknesses: the asbestos industry. Noranda invested \$1 billion in our region. Asbestos will become the biggest magnesium producer in the world.

However, had we not made it to that point, had we not had the financial resources required to put our ideas forward, had it not been for the investments made by the municipal government and the help from other governments, we would have missed that opportunity. The government is responsible for the redistribution of efforts, but also for the redistribution of tools. That was important.

My colleague has once again raised a major point. In Quebec, we speak more and more about rural areas and resource areas. We speak about what happened in the eighties under the Tory government. However, now is not the time for petty politics. There are no political colours when someone is going hungry and is about to lose his job in a region, in the country, in Quebec, in the North or in a mining town.

I take this opportunity to praise him. I very much appreciated the last or next to last speech by my colleague from Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik, when he criticized the government concerning air transportation. We sometimes wonder if it is worth speaking out. But, with what is going on and the reactions of the finance minister who is now talking about reviewing the charge, it is worth speaking out.

Private Members' Business

We are suggesting that the members should be able to speak more freely. We are all part of a political family, but we should be able to criticize each other in an appropriate way, just as it is done in a family. I congratulate the hon. member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik both personally and in public on his efforts with respect to issues like the airport charge introduced in the last budget. His efforts are beginning to pay off, and we should get favourable results.

Now, I hope this motion will make everybody more aware of the issue. It is not because unemployment is at a certain level in one place that everything is fine everywhere. It is just not true. When everything is fine, we should be investing. When one has no job, one does not save any money or invest in RRSPs, and one does not invest in the future. Thank heavens, we are coming out of the recession. Now is the time to invest and use all the opportunities as best we can.

I hope that the government members will support this motion and that our colleagues in the Canadian Alliance will understand the important role governments should play in regional development. It is not just important, it is crucial. If governments do not look after the regions, who will?

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): Before we proceed, hon. members will remember that we originally saw the clock as being 5.30 but it was 5.15. It makes it a little complicated. I need unanimous consent to recognize the last two speakers, the parliamentary secretary and the mover of the motion. Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

•(1815)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy St-Julien: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I did hear the Bloc member say no. But in any case, we started later because we were interrupted by a question of privilege.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): No. The 15 minutes we spent on the question of privilege must unfortunately count as part of private members' business. Unfortunately, the Chair cannot do otherwise.

Mr. Guy St-Julien: Madam Speaker, the standing orders provide that I have five minutes to reply. Nobody advised me of this, and I am entitled to five minutes to reply. I do not need unanimous consent, because this is provided for in the standing orders.

•(1820)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): The Chair did not interrupt the last speaker in time to give the member who moved the motion the five minutes he is entitled to, pursuant to the standing orders the House.

The hon. member has the floor.

Mr. Guy St-Julien: Madam Speaker, I thank you for your decision. The resource and rural regions are in dire need of autonomy. I am not asking for a new level of government for the resource regions. I would simply want to see them get the level of autonomy that they need to develop properly.

If the Canadian government really wants to help the resource and rural regions, it should look at what is being done in Sweden. What is important to know is that the federal ministers have done a good job in the regions. But there is still something missing.

The conservative member for Richmond—Arthabaska, who was serious and dynamic in his statement, stated that the resource and rural regions would have to take charge of their own interests. He mentioned a lack of money for the Val-Saint-François business development centre. We know that this centre really is very supportive of businesses. He talked about a vision, loans, refundable financial assistance. This is what is being suggested also for his region—he was talking about Noranda where asbestos is an important sector. This is what partnership is all about.

I appreciated the conservative member's words. Some might say "But there are not many of them". It is true that there are only a few of them, but they have a strong voice. This is the kind of support we need.

I will quote from an article published in *L'Acadie nouvelle* on St. Valentine's day, February 14, reporting what the finance minister and Liberal member for LaSalle—Emard said:

The approach to problems in large cities is not the same as that for the regions. There is nothing odd about that, because they do not have the same issues. So a plan containing the same solutions is of no use.

What the government should do is have one plan for cities, which will meet the needs of centres like Moncton, Halifax and Toronto, and another plan for the regions that need one, a plan which is just as applicable to the Acadian peninsula as to Red Deer, Alberta, because they have the same problems. There needs to be an approach that can handle both situations.

He added that the money is now on the table and that all he was asking the community was how to spend it. That is the reason for his visit to the maritime provinces in particular.

Finally, the federal Minister of Finance said:

The key to this initiative lies in the public's hands. The Canadian government is responsible for being there with infrastructure and development programs, but it is local initiative which will determine how we must implement them".

This is why I have quoted from letters written by local people asking us to intervene in the regions, whether Lac-Saint-Jean, Richmond—Arthabaska with its Conservative MP, or Abitibi-Témiscamingue. The minister must differentiate us from the major urban centres.

In closing, as far as the resource regions are concerned, such as Abitibi-Témiscamingue, 68% of our forest products go to Montreal, and 68% of the natural resources from our region create jobs there.

We in the resource regions need help. We need a change to be made to the budget so as to differentiate between our regions and the major urban centres. We have nothing against them, in fact we are proud of them, for there are major projects happening there. But we are in need of help in the rural regions, in the resource regions, for the future of our young people.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired. As the motion has not been designated as a votable item, the order is dropped from the order paper.

*Adjournment Debate***ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS***[English]*

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

FIREARMS REGISTRY

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Canadian Alliance): Madam Speaker, on November 6 the solicitor general and the former justice minister failed to answer my question about a firearms registration certificate being issued to an individual who does not own the firearm in question. Because the RCMP was responsible for the error, I asked the solicitor general:

The privacy commissioner is investigating a number of firearms licences that were issued with the wrong photos. Now we have a documented case of a firearm being registered to the wrong person. The unhappy recipient complains, "I do not want to be responsible for a firearm that I do not possess". Could the solicitor general please explain how the registry of firearms made such a potentially catastrophic mistake?

For some reason I still do not understand why the former minister of justice would not let the solicitor general answer his own question and she did not answer the question either. In her response the minister chose to play politics rather than to address a very serious error in the gun registry that threatens both the privacy and safety of a Canadian citizen. A strange response for a minister who claimed to be fully accountable and responsible for the entire Canadian firearms program.

Since this incident was documented in November we have had another firearms owner complain to his member of parliament that the same thing happened to him. He wrote on the bogus registration certificate:

Never registered this gun. Never owned this gun. Never even seen this gun.

Perhaps the new Minister of Justice will take more seriously the consequences of the bungling by his bureaucrats.

Earlier today I issued a news release documenting just a few of the more recent errors in the gun registry. These errors were documented by the minister's own department and provided to me in response to an access to information request. Other errors were reported in newspapers or to me personally.

I have in turn notified the Privacy Commissioner of Canada and the Auditor General of Canada of these errors and their consequences for the rights and safety of Canadian citizens.

Here is a short list of the errors I uncovered and made public today: there were 300,000 unclaimed guns in the old handgun registry; the gun registry lost track of more than 38,000 licensed gun owners; 832 duplicate firearms licences were issued; 28 duplicate firearms registration certificates were issued; there were 57 registration certificates for 16 guns; re-registration of 10 handguns resulted in a 50% error rate; a muzzleloader was registered as a single-shot machine gun; 3 rifles were registered to the wrong man; a handgun was registered to the wrong man; 2 rifles were registered as shotguns; 6 identical registration certificates were issued for 1 handgun; registration forms were sent to a wrong address; there was a woman's photo on a man's firearms licence and a man's photo on a woman's firearms licence; and 3 Winnipegers got the wrong photo on their firearms licences.

On Monday the new Minister of Justice proudly proclaimed to parliament that the gun registry works well. The minister should look again. His own department's documents prove otherwise. Here is a huge list of serious errors and we need an answer.

Mr. Paul Harold Macklin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to provide an update on the current status of the registration process and to reinforce the government's commitment to making firearm registration more convenient and client friendly.

The previous minister offered to investigate the matters raised by the hon. member for Yorkton—Melville when he originally asked the question almost four months ago. He did not take her up on the offer. On behalf of the government, I would like to restate that offer and extend it to all members of parliament if they have specific concerns.

I would like take the opportunity to outline the Canadian firearms centre's registration initiative. As part of the centre's commitment to client service and efficiency, the mailing of personalized registration forms to firearm owners and a limited time fee waiver has made its way across Canada.

Firearm owners in Atlantic Canada were the first to receive the personalized registration package and fee waiver in September. The package was then sent to licensed firearm owners in Ontario and Quebec in the fall, followed by Saskatchewan, Manitoba and the territories in December. The campaign will wrap up with the end of the fee waiver in Alberta and British Columbia on March 19.

The regional approach facilitates processing by staggering the applications received, ensuring a more timely response and that the quality of client service remains high.

Another new feature is online firearm registration. In response to these initiatives, Canadians are registering their firearms in record numbers. With 10 months left before the deadline, over 1.1 million of the 1.8 million licensed firearm owners, about 62%, have participated in the registration process. This includes more than 100,000 applications submitted over the Internet.

Over the last few months, the Canadian firearms program has completely restructured the registration process and implemented rigorous measures to ensure the integrity of information.

The new personalized registration form is mailed out directly to the licensee. When the registration application is returned for processing, the form is scanned, including the bar code that identifies the licence holder. Manual data entry is eliminated which minimizes the potential for error.

Also within this process, existing quality assurance procedures have been reinforced to ensure that the system captures accurate registration information for the appropriate licensee. The government is committed to ensuring that stringent security and privacy protection are maintained.

Adjournment Debate

When licensees receive their registration certificate, they should ensure the accuracy of the information. If there are discrepancies, individuals should contact the Canadian firearms centre to rectify the situation.

To conclude, recent initiatives to streamline the registration process have increased processing efficiencies and enhanced overall effectiveness. More important, it provides a more user friendly way for Canadians to meet their obligations to register their firearms, and they are registering.

I thank the hon. member for his question and for the opportunity to bring this important initiative back to the House's attention.

• (1825)

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz: Madam Speaker, I was trying to listen carefully for an answer and it really was not there. The exact opposite of what the hon. member just stated is true. Verifiers have been dismissed. The accuracy in the system is now worse than it has ever been. Now to lay the whole blame in the lap of a gun owner is completely wrong-headed.

I will submit a couple of quotations. The first one from February 7, 2001, is by the president of the Canadian Police Association, Constable Grant Obst. He said:

—a lot of Canadian cops who believe in the “concept” of a gun registry have profound doubts that the one being run by CFC [Canadian Firearms Centre] will ever offer police the information they needed to fight crime. “They’re not happy

with the information-fathering,” he said. “They’re asking themselves, will the information be accurate?”

As I have shown today, the information in the gun registry is not accurate despite what the government has said. I am asking the minister again—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada.

Mr. Paul Harold Macklin: Madam Speaker, in response to the hon. member, clearly we have made a great deal of progress. The online process is one way in which an individual can be very certain of getting accurate information recorded by the program.

For the member to suggest that there have been problems in the past is accurate and does reflect the situation of the past, but we are working now with much more efficiencies. We have simplified the forms and have done many things ensure that these errors will not occur. We will do our utmost to improve and continue to work with the program to ensure that all Canadians will feel not only that their information is properly recorded but that it is secure and private.

• (1830)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6.30 p.m.)

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Published under the authority of the Speaker of the House of Commons

Publié en conformité de l'autorité du Président de la Chambre des communes

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